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UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO SERMONS

BY

MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY FACULTIES

EDITED BY

THEODORE GERALD SOARES
The Department of Practical Theology

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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TO

THE ALUMNI OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, WHO ARE PREACHING THE GOSPEL AND BRINGING FORTH OUT OF THAT TREASURE THINGS NEW AND OLD

PREFACE

We are getting beyond the point where we are concerned to harmonize religion with science. The only harmony that is necessary is that religious men shall be utterly scientific in their thinking and that scientific men shall be vitally religious in their faith. Confusion arises, on the one side, when religious experience is made the credential for opinions which ought to be scientifically founded, and, on the other side, when the limits of scientific knowledge are set as the limits of the venture of faith.

Of course faith and science apprehend reality in different ways. Faith is practical, expectant, idealistic, daring to go beyond knowledge in its eager search for spiritual values. Science is analytic, investigative, critical, passionately seeking truth, but ever demanding its credentials. There is no necessary opposition here.

The classroom and the pulpit are places of different emphasis. The mood of faith belongs in the theological classroom, and must indeed irradiate all thinking upon religious truth; but the classroom is fundamentally a place for thought. And the scientific spirit ought to possess the preacher, for no depth of religious conviction may excuse loose thinking; yet the pulpit is especially the place for the expression of experience.

The theological professor may therefore well be a preacher. He rejoices in the religious freedom of the pulpit which permits him to speak messages complementary to those expressed in his scientific lectures and treatises. This book is a collection of such messages by professors in the divinity and allied departments of the University of Chicago. The sermons were not made for a book, but are those which have been preached in the course of occasional pulpit ministry to the churches. The title of the book is suggested by the fact that many of these sermons have been preached at the regular Sunday morning religious service of the University.

It need scarcely be said that each sermon represents the individual faith and opinion of the particular writer, for which no one but himself is responsible. It has been the most fundamental principle in this collaboration that each man should be perfectly free to utter his own message. No one will therefore attempt to find here a system of theology or a body of doctrine which represents the University. A university holds no corporate views which authorized representatives may declare, but stimulates every scholar to seek the truth and to speak it forth with humility and personal conviction.

If faith dominates the utterance of the pulpit, still more is it fundamental in communion with God. The brief prayer appended to each of these sermons is the endeavor of the preacher to express in the

language of devotion the religious feeling of his message.

As a further indication of that essentially religious quality of the sermon which constitutes its abiding place among the institutions of religion, the editor has ventured to offer an introductory essay on "The Need of Power in American Preaching."

THE EDITOR

January, 1915

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

BY

THE EDITOR

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY: THE NEED OF POWER IN AMERICAN PREACHING

In the face of a great deal of cynicism about the pulpit, it was refreshing to hear a noted judge say recently, "I need the sermon." He meant of course that in contrast with the sordidness of everyday life he needed the ideality of religion. He was a man of many burdens who needed inner courage and comfort; he was seeking to do his duty, and needed vision to see it and strength to perform it. He thought that he might expect from the Christian minister some stimulus and help. He would not probably have cared so to express it, but he wanted preaching with power. Intelligence, lucidity, forcefulness would be assumed, but beyond all these—power.

Power does not belong to any school of thinking or method of preaching, as such, neither to orthodoxy nor to liberalism, neither to evangelistic preaching nor to educational preaching, neither to the individualistic message nor to the social message. It may be present in any of these and it may be absent from any of them. Power does not have to do with the content of the message, but with its quality. I do not mean, of course, its delivery, but its essential religiousness.

Power is absent from a large part of American preaching because that preaching is not religious.

It is not essentially and vitally and experientially religious. While we recognize much strong, noble preaching, for which we thank God and take courage, is there not also a large amount of preaching that could be put into the following categories, which are not mutually exclusive: (1) an unconvincing evangelicalism—mere platitudes about redemptive doctrines without clear relation to human life; (2) a solemn pietism—conventional appeals for consecration and separation from the world; (3) a weak sentimentalism—pathetic stories, far-fetched religious experiences, general unreality to the healthy-minded; (4) a dry intellectualism—mere discussion of subjects, the sort of thing that can be done better in a magazine; (5) a belated controversialism—fighting over old battles, tilting at windmills; (6) a shallow sensationalism—catching the crowd by the methods of the vaudeville and the yellow press, anything for notoriety; (7) a bumptious egotism—the minister carried away by the self-importance of his leadership, thrusting his views, his hobbies, his methods, himself, and even his family, upon public attention; (8) a shallow socialism—the use of the pulpit for the presentation of particular economic theories and partisan views with no great human appeal? Some of these preachings gain large audiences, even fill up the membership of churches, even secure conversions and reformations of life, but their influence taken as a whole is petty, cheapening to religion, and is

not bringing God to men and lifting men to God. If all preaching were of such character the days of the pulpit would be numbered.

What is it in the preacher that makes the people feel that the sermon is different from all other speech, and that the church is the house of God, the very gate of heaven? We read the sermons of the Hebrew prophets, and they stir us today as if they spoke to our own needs, while we feel that such men had the right to say, "Thus saith the Lord." They had a divine message, though it might relate to selling goods and hearing lawsuits. Who can miss the power of Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah? We listen to Jesus and, with the multitudes, wonder at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. We feel the correspondence between inner life and outward speech that enabled him to speak as one having authority. Luther, the man of prayer, tells his disciples, "When you are about to preach, speak with God." Baxter preaches "as a dying man to dying men." Andrew Fuller feels that "the pulpit is an awful place; we preach for eternity." Jonathan Edwards, whom our generation utterly misunderstands, judging him from a single sermon, had those requirements of a great preacher which Phillips Brooks gave of Henry Ward Beecher, and which belonged to all of these men, "the love of truth and the love of souls." Chalmers preached "with blood earnestness." When Maclaren opened to men the word they felt that

he had been with God. And Spurgeon said, "It is a bath in the waters of Paradise to preach with the Holy Ghost."

I have heard my father describe a meeting held in London at midday, when the men of affairs crowded to hear Spurgeon speak on prayer. He would resolve their doubts and help them to believe. But he said, "What shall I tell you about prayer? Shall I explain how cool water slakes the thirst, how food strengthens the hungry, how fire warms the chilled? Taste and see that the Lord is good. Pray and find God." And they went away feeling that the preacher knew the meaning of prayer.

Recently, in a Sunday school, the president of a Kentucky mountain college told the story of the attempt of the Christian school to teach the mountain boys that the heroism of Jesus is greater than that of revenge. He explained that at the present time there are two lads, scions of an old feud, who are sitting side by side in the schoolroom. He spoke with the exquisite simplicity and utter genuineness that we associate with Lincoln. One of his young hearers, not much given to express himself, volunteered the remark to his teacher, "It does make a difference when you hear a man who really believes what he says." Do we mean it or are we preaching?—that is what the heart of man is hungry to know. God forgive us that such an antithesis has ever been conceivable!

Power is not a superficial matter. It is not saintly appearance or low mellow voice, nor is it any style of speech. It is what our fathers called unction, but that is certainly not unctuousness. And it cannot be worked up. Spurgeon said that some people confound inspiration with perspiration. It is not the manner of the man, it is his spirit. We have felt it in Arthur T. Pierson with his slight, almost ascetic appearance, and on the same platform in the big, manly A. J. Gordon, in the robust, square-built Spurgeon, and in the tall, red-haired Drummond (yes, even dressed in big checked trousers), in the chaste eloquence of George Adam Smith and in the restrained passion of R. J. Campbell, in the strident tones of Moody and in the exquisite modulation of Gypsy Smith. And it is not a matter of numbers. We have found it in the speakers at the great conventions, and we have missed it there. We have found it in the little gatherings, and we have also missed it there. It is in Martineau the Unitarian, as he preaches to fifty people, and it is absent sometimes from the evangelist, as he speaks to thousands. It belongs to those preachers who having a great message worthy to move the souls of men are themselves so moved that they forget themselves in the message and cry from their hearts, *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam.*

Power in preaching is founded in the preacher's oneness with the religious needs of his people.

There is no power when he preaches over their heads. When the parishioner of an academic young preacher said that he did not understand his sermons, but he liked to hear him "get them off," he was testifying to coruscation, not power. The people make the sermon with the preacher. There is a common religious need which he understands and to which they respond. He knows their failings and their sins, their fears and their hopes, and the good in them that will answer the appeal of righteousness. He speaks an elemental message and they know it is true.

Preaching then is a social process. It has not always seemed so. How lonely seem the great prophets with their messages of doom. But they have not been lonely. Their times have been with them, and the consciences of the people were their allies. The people were with Chrysostom, though they dreaded his searching sermons. Florence knew that Savonarola spoke the truth. And even Edwards' fiery warnings were but the echoes of the fears of every unregenerate soul. And so far as these men did not speak to the common needs there was no power in their words. Let a man speak of sins which his hearers do not feel, or of hopes which they do not share, and there is no *rapport* between them, and so no power in his words, be they never so true. That is a difficulty in much of the social preaching of today. Blinded by class prejudice, men do not see their sins, so the privileged may

think the preacher but a ranter, and the unprivileged may reckon him a trimmer, and neither may hear the message. The message did not go deep enough. It should have struck below superficial prejudices to the sense of human sympathy and obligation. An oriental monarch might not brook a reproof for an act of selfish tyranny common to his kind, but the man David recognized the guilt of the tyrant in the parable, and Nathan preached with power that day. There is preaching today that makes men feel the sin of social tyranny and the sin of social hate, as the preacher has made himself at one with the conscience and the heart of his congregation.

And not all of preaching is denunciation. There is comfort, hope, courage, faith, love, to preach about. Let one get below the commonplace to the common needs and he will preach with power. In the dark days of financial depression a certain pastor walked down the street and talked with the gloomy men in the stores who were looking for the bad to become worse. He went home to pray and to get them a message. Next Sunday he gave them the text, "Then the king arose and sat in the gate." And he told them of David, with the bitter sorrow in his heart, clearing his brow, going forth to meet his people, saving a nation from disruption, bringing courage out of gloom. He preached with power that day and the people remember the sermon after twenty years.

Given this social quality of sympathy, power in preaching may be defined as such a presentation of an intense religious conviction as shall tend to produce in the congregation an emotional experience of that conviction.

It is first of all conviction. A man discusses what he thinks; he preaches what he knows. There is room in the sermon for discussion, for the presentation of opinion, for a definition of the proper field of wise agnosticism; but central in it is some conviction which the preacher believes without doubt. Our age needs convictions. We are constantly and necessarily changing our opinions. Every advancement of science compels us to readjust our theories, so we are in danger of holding everything tentatively. There is the more need for insistence upon moral certainties. Nothing has modified the truth that "the pure in heart see God," and he who thus sees God can preach it. One of our noble elder brethren, whom we all love, has said, "I am as sure of God as of my own existence. I pillow my head upon that faith at night." If he should undertake a philosophical definition of Deity we might not agree with him, but he has given us a religious experience that is intensely real to him. He gives it with power, and when we hear we understand.

The conviction to be presented must be religious, for that is what makes it preaching. A man may have intellectual convictions, e.g., upon economic

questions, upon industrial questions, even upon theological questions, but the presentation of intellectual convictions calls for a certain modesty, and a recognition that there is another side to the argument. The speaker may have a great passion of advocacy, but he knows that he is pleading a cause. Religious conviction is different from that, for it is born of inner experience. It is communicated not as argument but as deliverance. That it is more blessed to give than to receive is a proposition that might be argued psychologically from the standpoint of the higher hedonism, and it would be possible to maintain with good show of reason that philanthropy has actually exceeded acquisition in yielding genuine satisfaction to the agent. But it is a different matter when this principle of life is urged out of an experience of its truth; when the scene of the utterance of the words is called to mind, and the hands of Paul, scarred by rough labor that he might burden no man, are seen extended in benediction over the men whom he exhorts to help the weak with sacrifice; when the utterance is followed back to him who spake it, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and who found his joy in service; and when the glowing experience of those who have given themselves for others' good is called to mind. It is not a piece of dialectics then; it is a revelation of the human soul. It is a religious conviction which is its own credential, and it may be spoken with

the power that belongs to the certitudes of the heart.

Or, again, there is the proposition that a laborer should become *ipso facto* part owner in the corporation for which he works. This is a profound conviction of many thoughtful men today. But it is a position to be argued and defended with due recognition that there is much to be said theoretically, as well as practically, against it. One may speak upon it with force, but he has no right to speak with dogmatism, for many thoughtful people think otherwise. But that industry should become a genuine democracy when we can find out the way, that labor should never be dehumanizing, that he who makes the prosperity and economic security of the country should share in that prosperity and security, that we should have a Christian industrialism—this is a moral conviction, a religious conviction, to be urged with the passion of human sympathy. And if there are those who do not agree, so much the worse for them, for they are wrong, and more than that they are wicked. There is a splendid intolerance about a religious conviction that enables one to dare even in the twentieth century to say, "Thus saith the Lord."

And power in preaching is such a presentation of religious conviction as secures emotional response. A literal rendering of the opening words of the exile prophecy runs, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem."

Of course preaching addresses itself to the intellect, because it is reasoned discourse. But the truth finds contact with our emotional experience. We feel its truth, and only so are we impelled to action. When Guthrie preaches on "The New Heart," we do not argue psychology with him, we feel the need of the divine renewal. When Chalmers tells us of "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection," we feel that he is right, and wish that such a tide of larger faith and hope and love might cleanse our souls of their impurities. When Spurgeon speaks of "Songs in the Night," we admire the ardent spirits who could sing amid distress, and long for such a victory over circumstance. When Beecher discourses on the love of God he does not prove anything, but makes us breathe the atmosphere of that pervading love. When Brooks tells us of the abundant life we just feel that it is glorious to live so richly. When Moody speaks to us of God we feel that he has a personal friendship with him of whom he speaks. I remember a man criticizing Gypsy Smith's sermon and asking my opinion. I told him that doubtless he was right, but that during the sermon I was thinking more of my own sins than of the preacher's homiletics. When we thus feel the truth the pulpit has spoken with power.

If the preacher have great religious convictions, how may he so express them as to secure this emotional response? There is a certain mood out of which great preaching comes. The men who have

been mighty in the pulpit have laid emphasis on prayer. Of course this is the very means of securing religious conviction. But it is especially the prayer preceding preaching that has made men effective. It is of course simple psychological law that this would be the highest preparation for the pulpit. One's theme has received concentrated attention in relation to the spiritual meaning of the universe. It is the exercise that enables a man to speak of himself as an ambassador of Christ. One thinks of the familiar story of the deacons meeting for prayer with their pastor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. No one could get speech with Whitefield for two hours before his sermon, preacher of superb resources though he was. Does not the fussiness of the hour before our public worship deprive our ministers of the power that might be theirs as they came from fellowship with God to speak to his people?

We have said that this power of speech is not a matter of pleasing voice or pulpit presence or effective delivery. And yet, of course, in a way, it is. A man may have convictions and be unconvincing. He may be profoundly affected but move no one else. Given the fundamentals that are spiritual, there is an art of preaching, even an art of genuineness and impressiveness, that greatly needs to be mastered if congregations are to feel the power of the truth.

And then there is a technique in creating a mood in the congregation to respond emotionally to the

effective sermon. The worship which precedes the message affords great opportunity for this. The purpose of worship is the culture of religious feeling. Song, prayer, scripture, response should so melt a congregation into unity as to prepare it to hear a message from the preacher's life. One cannot help wondering whether we have not in America made most clumsy failure in this fundamental matter by the introduction of the professional quartette, who are not supposed to be ministers of music but performers. The good singing of real religious music is of course highly calculated to produce the mood of worship, but the moment there is any appearance of performance the mood is dispelled. The sermon instead of coming in on the full tide of religious feeling has often the difficult initial task of calling back the audience from the concert-room to the house of God. As a matter of fact there is need of power in the musical service of the church. But that's another story: I am concerned here only to call attention to the need of supplementing the preparation of the sermon by a careful study of the whole course of the worship to the end that there may be an effective emotional response of the people to the message of the hour. It need not be artificial; there is nothing so natural as a masterpiece. The great preachers were, in the best sense, consummate students of effect. And power, vital as it is in origin, is ultimately a matter of effect.

But how shall the people feel that the message is divine? A noted English evangelist used sometimes to stride onto the platform after a period of singing, and startle the audience with the announcement, "I have come from God." It was a crude bit of stage play; but he was a good man and his instinct was right. He must let the people know that he has a religious message. There is a response to a religious message, which, in the nature of the case, is given to no other. The purpose of the sermon is to help the people to meet the problems of life in the sense of the fellowship of God. So the preacher must know how to make his own sense of that fellowship real to his people. When Moses spoke his face shone. There is such a staying with God that the evidence shall be manifest to men. Am I unfortunate in my example? Shall I be reminded that Moses "wist not that his face shone?" To be sure, the preacher will not be conscious of that inner fitness that makes his sermon strong, but, like Moses, he will so order his gathering of the assembly at the foot of the mount that they will know that he who comes to them with the law of God in his hand has come from "speaking with him." The old mystics worked out a technique that they called "the practice of the presence of God." It is ours to work out a technique of practicing to make real the presence of God to men. They who have been able to do so preached with power.

Is there any need to argue the worth of a vital, enthusiastic, faith-compelling pulpit? Our age must have a preaching that probes and convicts, that inspires and impels, that comforts and sustains; a preaching that makes men conscious of their sins so that they will hate them, and believers in righteousness so that they will strive for it, and sure of a great love so that they will rest in it, and so hopeful of the kingdom of God that they will pray, and work, and fight, and live, and even die for it. We are all skeptics, and we are longing for faith, and we would hear a man who believes something worth believing. We are so conscious of the mechanical order that is evident all about us that we are weary for a man of vision to tell us of spiritual values that he has found in the world. We know that the things that are seen are temporal, but we want to know that there are things that are not seen that are eternal. Let him who can speak of them tell us. And if he knows the truth, and knows how to tell it, we will listen. Warring interests will listen; youth and strength and age will listen; for there is that within us that answers to the truth as deep calleth unto deep.

I

THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

BY

CHARLES RICHMOND HENDERSON

THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom (Heb. 1:8).

In the civilized world the most glorious, beautiful, and permanent structures are dedicated to religion. Religious institutions are endowed by those who believe in the abiding vitality of faith. The restlessness and vicissitudes of human life make men yearn for something which cannot be moved. The pyramids of Egypt, the temples of Greece and Rome, the cathedrals of mediaeval Europe are costly and precious monuments of this demand for something enduring, symbol of the Eternal. The endowments established for religion and religious education bear witness to the same faith in the future of religion on this earth.

On what ground do men make these investments of sacrifice and wealth? Is there reason in the nature of Christianity and the nature of man for this anticipation?

Let us make as precise a statement as possible of the meaning of our claim that the reign of our God is everlasting; for it seems to many a bold and unwarranted promise for the future. All admit that religion has been a great power in the past; but many think it is decaying, and that it has already

dwindled to be merely a subordinate factor in the world's interests and motives. We confidently assert that the reign of God is to be without end, and will be more and more recognized as the supreme and dominating human interest.

We do not pretend to know what is going to happen in the centuries which loom before us. That is not revealed to us. We must travel onward to see for ourselves and we must even help make that future. We lay no claim to foretelling personal or national fortunes; we leave that to palmists, gypsies, and their ilk, who feed on human credulity and ignorance.

Our confidence in the eternity of religion rests, not on our knowledge of future happenings, but on our rational assurance that a certain spiritual and moral quality is the essence of the universe in which we live, of which we form an organic part, and from which our own deepest spiritual nature takes its origin.

We must assign this moral, spiritual quality to One who is akin to us, to the Person we may call Our Father; for righteousness as a mere abstraction does not exist; it is conceivable to our minds only as the disposition of a Person who manifests himself to us and in us. We do not comprehend him absolutely and completely; but we have transactions with him and gain some valid knowledge of his nature. This assurance is not the kind of "knowledge" which makes us aware of past events

or actions; it is rather an estimate of the value of events and things, a valuation which seems to fit in best with all we know; it is a belief which of itself makes our universe congruous, unified, and worthful to us; and it is a belief on which we can most surely and safely act. It is not such knowledge as we gain through the senses, but it is an interpretation of that knowledge which gives reality and value to all we see and hear.

This definition of our claim is necessary, because men of our age are critical and quick to discover weakness in an argument; often they are more alert to challenge our logic than able to assist in the construction of a tenable and helpful view of the world. We ourselves do not wish to rest upon a delusion nor to cheat our own reason with pleasing fallacies.

We are ready to admit many and serious difficulties and objections; but we cling to our conviction because it is the only positive and luminous working hypothesis which brings agreement into our rational life and enables us to act. The good man is not one who never has a doubt; but he is one who determines to act, in spite of all difficulties, upon the theory that righteousness ought to control; and he waits for objections to disappear of themselves, while he does his duty hour by hour.

"The Kingdom of God," which was the central theme of the message of Jesus, is everlasting because it is justice realized; and righteousness can never pass away.

Justice or righteousness is not mere retribution, which looks to the past—to guilt, to punishment. That is, of course, one aspect of justice which cannot be ignored; but if that were all of religion it would come to an end. The feeble and sinful creature could not endure all he deserves; and one would think God would grow weary of acting as a perpetual hangman. Why should he keep up the burning of useless fires? "I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies," he says of himself.

Justice looks chiefly to the future; it justifies; it works on men to make them really just (Luke, chap. 15). The father seeks until he finds. Retribution is itself not an end but a means; it is a revelation to a man of the true nature of his deed and character, bringing both home to him so he can escape from their tyranny into a large and worthy universe.

Religion—righteousness—is permanent because it is essentially vital, ascending, transforming.

We may sometimes, misled by false traditions, think of the necessity of adapting religion to new conditions; as if somehow this impertinent world were in danger of outgrowing faith, and we must in desperation adjust our beliefs, institutions, and methods, though with reluctance and dread, to the changing order. Tradition, use, and wont seek the eternal in the changeless, the inert, the unmoving. But this is to look for the living in a tomb; it is to deify paralysis; it is to idolize a fossil.

The truth rather is that the spiritual energy which we call Christianity is itself the creator of new forms, new demands, new activities, new situations. Jesus calls his gift "eternal life." Jesus Christ was not found among the dead, even by the tender women who sought in the tomb for some relic of him to honor. The white-robed angel declared: "He is not here; he is risen and goes before you." He is never found in the rear ranks, but always in the front line of the army of progress.

Christianity—the righteous divine life—is responsible for all the mental agitation, the invention, the exploration, the restlessness of scientific curiosity. This surging commotion in the souls of men is the evidence of the working of Christianity. "The kingdom of God is like leaven"; so Jesus said.

> Men my brothers, men the workers,
> Ever seeking something new;
> That which they have done but earnest
> Of the things which they will do.

This quest of hope, this climbing instinct, is a creation of the righteous God working in us his larger will.

> Of better and brighter days to come
> Man is talking and dreaming ever;
> To gain a happy and golden home,
> His efforts he ceases never:
> The world decays and again revives;
> But man for improvement ever strives.

The divine Spirit is the great agitator and radical who says, "I make all things new." It is the leader who said through Moses: "Speak to Israel that they go forward."

Divine justice makes men whole, perfect. "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." With this ideal before us mutilation becomes an offense. Body and soul have their rights. Asceticism, so far as it required suppression of mental powers, was a sin against divine purpose. Athletic exercise, public hygiene, recreation, love, friendship, parenthood, art, science, commerce, government, politics, all are necessary elements in the divine plan for developing humanity to perfection. We cannot spare one of these factors. That which answers any real human need is part of our vocation. It is our duty to further life, even abundant life.

The Kingdom of God is everlasting because men are created by the God of eternal life for his glory, and men can rest only in him. Priests did not invent religion; but religion created priests and churches and altars; and as religion—God's life in man—grows with the spirit of humanity, it calls for better priests, prophets, cults, creeds, churches, and it creates them.

There can never come a time, in any world, where by any possibility justice, love, faith, hope will not be the supreme good of intelligent spirits. "Now abide faith, hope, love." If we are to trust reason at

all, even to expose errors in religious creeds, we must assume that righteousness is at the foundation of the world-order. Any other assumption makes the pursuit of philosophy, science, action insane, bereft of moral quality.

Let us deal for a moment with a skeptical suggestion now and then heard. May not the world find a substitute for religion; some experience which will be for man what at its best faith in God has thus far been to him? Practically a good many men seem to imagine that this is possible.

Will athletics, sport, take the place of religion? To the superficial observer attending a football play it might seem that religion is a matter of minor importance. No such crowds can be gathered to worship or listen to sermons. To witness the enthusiasm, the absolute absorption in the excitement of the conflict, one might despair of religion, and, for the same reason, of art, music, and all the other highest factors of culture.

But all this tumult and shouting dies. It is too furious to last long. There come at last thinking, reflection, anticipation. One cannot judge of what is deepest and most enduring by some interest which flames forth like a conflagration and burns out rapidly, only to sink into gray ashes before the day is past. So far as athletic sports perfect men physically they will remain a legitimate part of the eternal life. With growing knowledge and good sense their relative value will be established in a rational scale.

Will business or politics offer a substitute for religion? Both are clamorous, absorbing, and insistent. It is charged by many European observers that Americans care for nothing but money, that we bow to earth before the Golden Calf and serve the Almighty Dollar; and there are facts which may point to such a dishonoring conclusion. But this again is a superficial account of things, for our business men are buyers of goods as well as producers; and they have an object in making money. Not rarely this object is a permanent and universal good, a service to humanity, an aid to idealism, an endowment of worship.

And whatever distracted men of affairs may do or think, business itself is an expression of the divine life in this world. The ancient Hebrews, in an age when national existence and all solemn trusts had to be defended by fighting, imagined Jehovah as "a man of war." In our times we must think of the Lord as a man of business. Industry and trade can never be fully, deeply understood until we discover what the Creator is making. Whatever is an essential factor in the creative evolution of a perfect race of sons of God has all the significance and dignity of the end served.

What of politics? It sometimes requires more than a superficial glance to discover the Kingdom of God in legislatures, especially when they insult the White Throne by resort to bribery and spoliation, and when they vote, perhaps by a small majority,

to make corruption respectable and official. This perversion of political power is short-lived; its doom is everlasting shame, and they who are guilty may well pray for oblivion. Deep in the spirit of the democracy is a belief in righteousness which reasserts itself from age to age with clearer vision and gathering power.

Will friendship and love displace religion? They are revelations of the divine goodness and fellowship; never in their pure form are they substitutes for that friendship which is the archetype of all tender affections of man and wife, of parent and child, of friend with friend. When friendship roots deep in the rational universe, when it blossoms into generous deeds and sacrificial martyrdom, when it is purified from mere passion, when it insists on being deathless, selfless, then it is not to be distinguished from religion itself.

Will art supersede religion? That cannot be; for art itself is just the most perfect method known to man of giving form and feature to divine beauty. God is the supreme beauty, and he loves it well. When all the limbs, organs, and countenances of men are sound and perfect in action we call the being graceful. Grace in body is akin to grace in spirit. If art ever becomes deforming, immoral, debasing, it is no longer enduring; its ignoble function as "procuress to the lords of hell" is short-lived. The standards of mature criticism let only expurgated editions remain popular.

Will science and scientific interest supersede religion? There are men who are deeply absorbed, through life, in the work of investigations, libraries, laboratories. If asked whether they can get along without belief and worship, they may stop long enough to say they have not had time to think; they may even break silence with an exclamation of impatient doubt.

But such enthusiasm for science is exceptional; it belongs to few men. And even with this class, to whom humanity owes so great a debt, we must not be deceived by external appearances. We must ask what beliefs are assumed without much reflection in their daily pursuits; we must ourselves judge of the significance of their deeds and the worthfulness of their labors. We may even have a right to point out to them that they are more or less consciously priests in the temple of duty, who

> Do thy work and know it not.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Who loves not knowledge? Who will rail
> Against her beauty? Let her mix
> With men and prosper; who shall fix
> Her pillars? Let her work prevail.
>
> I would the great world grew like thee,
> Who grewest not alone in power
> And knowledge, but by year and hour
> In reverence and in charity.

The Divine One is not all "religious," if we use the word "religious" in its narrow, traditional sense.

The Creator, if we can at all draw inferences from his works and activities, is many-sided. He has more interests going than listening to endless psalms and hymns of adoration. Who but he is architect and builder of the material universe? Is not he a painter when the glowing west at sunset is splendid with its vast canvas, on which all colors flash, to become more delicate and die out with the night? Is not he a singer, when the birds in leafy spring sound their love-calls and rise on joyous wings above the meadows with their harmonious madness? And what is that the sculptor feels within him when he shapes his spiritual vision into a delight and a desire? When the artist really knows himself, he is not vain; he tells you it was an inspiration from a better world. He works with God to decorate the habitation of the Spirit, a beautiful universe.

The Kingdom of God is eternal; but are the institutions of religion abiding? Is the church to last? That depends on whether the particular church in question is serving the righteousness required by the ages. Any particular sect may be merged in a larger trust. Denominations have their day and cease to be; our little systems are but broken lights.

But some institution called a church will remain so long as such agencies are needed. The poetic prophet of the new Jerusalem "saw no temple therein"; not because religion had become extinct, but because God was all in all as the temple of that fair city.

Humanity learns to dress in furs in Greenland; wears light fabrics in India. Its garments are changed for changing seasons. Humanity builds churches and altars to meet its needs; old furniture which gets in the way is cut to new patterns or stored in museums in grateful memory of bygone services to revered ancestors.

But institutions are not wholly lost, even when discarded. Each age is child of all that precedes. Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil. The sapling is merged in the tree; the rills flow into a river; the mortal will put on immortality. In evolution matter and force are transformed, never annihilated; nothing is cast aimless to the void; all experience is utilized; tears become pearls. The agonies of primitive man struggling upward reappear in Wagner's weird and awful music of the *Nibelungen Ring*.

> No leaf that dawns to petal
> But hints the angel plan.

Youth may become prematurely impatient of the institutions of religion and utter hasty and callow judgments about them. Thus many a writer besides Voltaire has foretold the passing of the Bible. It remains classic. As someone has said: the story of William Tell may be a legend; but its influence on Swiss patriotism is permanent. The story of the steam issuing from the boiling kettle as the suggestion to Watt of a steam engine may be a fabrication; but the steam engine itself is a fact beyond

dispute. The story of Jonah may be proved an invention; but the divine patience and pity revealed in that pathetic narrative are of all times. There never was a "prodigal son" who could sit for a photograph; but Jesus in telling the matchless parable opened a window through which all the world can see a Father and hear His welcome home.

Each generation desires to amend its constitutions and revise its creeds; but that is only to give to growing freedom and justice and faith a more fitting dress. A mummy never asks for new clothes; the old costume is good enough for its embalmed bones. Changes of creed are signs of life and expansion.

From a consideration of objections we return to the theme of our message: the theme of justice, the scepter of righteousness, the everlasting kingdom. He who surrenders his life to that cause invests in the best securities. He who builds on the divine will has abiding foundations for his immortal hopes. What we do will be modified; but no deed of service for Christ will ever be lost. "The floweret may die; but the fruit scents the plain."

PRAYER

Everlasting God, our Heavenly Father: Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, thou art; the same, yesterday, today, forever. Thou dwellest in light; thou reignest in truth and uprightness. Thou art reliable, and we

trust in thee. Chance and change are busy ever; and our lives are often in the gloom of the shadows of disappointment. Sin darkens our skies, weakness of will defeats us, and temptations assail us from the night; we know not whence.

Oh, come to deliver us now! Thou art seeking us, good Father. Awaken in us wanderers a vast and hungry homesickness for thy house and thy welcome. We are dwelling in a far country among strangers; and we are terrified in the desert and ashamed of our condition as slaves in company with sinners. We feel deep within us the call to the freedom of heroes of God, and a mysterious longing is in our hearts to be at home with thee.

We beseech thee never to permit us to rest in delicious error, in pleasant sin, in popular falsehood; but only in active service, in usefulness to our fellow-creatures, thy loved children. When we feel secure in a false position, send thorns and whips of scorpions to make us uneasy. When we are satisfied with our achievements, reveal to us our danger of losing our ideals of perfection. And when thy discipline seems too hard to bear, give us thy gracious help. When the right way is stopped by mountains, make our faith strong to remove them. When, in that way, we come to the brink of death, and our feet touch the last flood, may it shrink in volume and the brighter shore be found near, and the banks of green covered with loved ones ready to welcome us.

Thine shall be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, world without end. AMEN.

II

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

BY

ERNEST DE WITT BURTON

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men (Matt. 5:13).

The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of the sayings of Jesus upon one of the most important themes on which Jesus ever spoke to men: the conduct and character which make men acceptable to God.

The discourse opens with a collection of aphorisms, each of which begins with the word "Blessed" and which together set forth an ideal of moral character. The emphasis of these sentences is not upon what men do, but upon what they are; not on conduct, but on character; not on the externals of life, but on that which is inmost in life. But the second paragraph, of which our text constitutes the first part, deals with the influence of men in the world, the effect which men of such character as that described in the first paragraph have upon their fellow-men: "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Ye are the light of the world."

The relation of these two paragraphs, whether we owe it to Jesus or to the evangelist who gathered together his words, in any case truly reflects an important characteristic of the teaching of Jesus. The religion of Jesus is fundamentally a religion of

the heart. Its primary emphasis is not on ritual, not on externals, not even on conduct, but upon character. Appropriately, therefore, the Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes.

But appropriately also the Beatitudes are immediately followed by a paragraph which puts the emphasis on the transitive aspect of character, on the influence of men on their fellow-men. For the religion of Jesus is no self-centered religiosity. It is no self-seeking spirituality. Its center is far beneath all expression and all conduct; but it does not stop there. It inevitably finds expression in conduct, and exerts an influence on others than its possessor. It is fundamentally personal and individual; but it is just as certainly transitive and social.

But what then precisely is the nature of the influence which the disciples of Jesus are expected by him to exert? For it is evidently his disciples to whom Jesus is speaking and to whom the "ye" of our text is addressed. The sermon is introduced by the statement, "When he had sat down his disciples came unto him and he opened his mouth and taught them." And it is his disciples of whom he demands that they shall be poor in spirit and pure in heart and so hungry and thirsty after righteousness that they will be persecuted for their righteousness. What then is the influence that Jesus expected his disciples to exert?

"Ye are the salt of the earth." There can be no doubt that when Jesus speaks of salt he has in

mind its preservative power—its antiseptic value. In a land where ice was almost unknown, and the preservation of it in hot weather wholly unknown, in an age when the various antiseptics known to modern times had never been so much as dreamed of, salt was the most familiar, probably the only, article used to preserve food from decay. This article, familiar to every housewife, Jesus takes as the symbol of what his disciples are to be in the world. "Ye are the salt of the earth." By your presence in the community, he says, the community is to be saved from moral putrefaction.

But how are these men to preserve the community? As even ten godly men would have saved Sodom, because for their sake God would have spared the wicked city? No, not thus. Men do not mix salt with food, and then preserve the food after it is spoiled for the sake of the good salt there is in it. They put salt on food to *keep* it from decaying. Evidently, therefore, Jesus is speaking here of the influence which his disciples are to exert upon the community and by which the community is to be kept morally sound and sweet.

But to the imposition of this duty which he thus lays upon his disciples, Jesus adds a solemn warning: "But if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men."

But how can salt lose its savor? In the sense of the modern chemist this is indeed impossible. To

him salt is simply chloride of sodium. As such it cannot lose its properties. You may dissolve it, or dry it; expose it to air and light, or shut it in darkness. So long as there is a particle of it left it is simply salt, and has all the qualities of salt. But Jesus is not speaking of the salt of the modern chemist, but of the salt of ancient commerce and of ancient household use. And this salt not being a pure chemical compound but a mixture of true salt with other ingredients, it was possible that all the true salt should be dissolved out of it, and there be left behind only a white powder, looking like salt indeed, but having none of the savor of salt and none of its preservative power. It is indeed, so Jesus says, worse than no salt at all; it is contemptible, fit only for rejection and contempt—to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. So is the professed disciple of Jesus who is not so in reality but only in appearance and name. He is worse than useless, he is contemptible.

This then is the teaching of Jesus in these familiar words. He lays upon his disciples a serious responsibility; he addresses to them a solemn warning. They are to be the preservative force in human society, preventing its decay and moral putrefaction. But they are to accomplish this effect, not by bearing a name nor by having an appearance, but by actually possessing character and exerting the influence which that character gives them. Perhaps it would be well to stop here, and

with this brief statement of their meaning let the words of our Lord preach their own solemn sermon to all who call themselves his disciples. Yet, lest we fail to make the application to our own lives and conduct, let us try to put this teaching into a few sentences which, being stated in the language of today, may help us to make the teaching practical.

1. The only force that can preserve society from corruption and give it true prosperity is the presence and influence of good men. Doubtless we all assent to this proposition. But the world generally does not believe it, and there is a strong tendency on the part of the disciples of Jesus to lose faith in it.

It is, for example, a very common belief among men that commercial prosperity is that which is most needful for the well-being of any community, from the family to the nation. How much of the talk upon the streets about hard times and good times, how much of the writing for the press has at bottom this thought that commercial prosperity carries with it well-being in general! Jesus did not hold this doctrine. The men to whom he said, "Ye are the salt of the earth," were not the money-kings of Judea, nor were they in any large sense the representatives of the financial interests of their land. Had they dropped out of society altogether it is doubtful whether the commercial world would have felt the slightest shock. Four of them had indeed been fairly successful in a small fish business, and one of them had been a collector of petty port-customs on

the Sea of Galilee. But even these occupations they had abandoned to follow Jesus, to listen to his teachings, and to do his work. No, Jesus believed that not financial prosperity but moral and religious men could save the world from decay and rottenness.

And all history has gone on to show that he was right. Consider how it is in families. How often has it happened that the son reared in a godly home, amid humble surroundings, perhaps even in poverty, has gone out into the world and by the force of those qualities which his early training gave him has gained great wealth. Transmitting this to his sons, they have perhaps walked in his footsteps. But how sadly often has it happened that in the next generation, or at the most in the next but one, industry has been succeeded by idleness; diligence in business by luxury in living; high ideals by grossness and sensuality; until the representatives of the once honored name are despised and scorned, not by stern moralists only, but by honorable men of every class.

Consider how it has been with nations. Have the periods of great financial prosperity brought with them a sweetening and purifying of the life of the nation? Have they been the times of heroic endeavor and of splendid achievement? On the contrary, it has come to be recognized that every such period brings with it grave danger, and that periods of depression and of loss are not only certain from an economic point of view, but almost a matter of neces-

sity for the preservation and development of the nation's real life.

Again there are those who believe that culture and education are the forces that preserve society from decay. Now he is surely blind who does not see that the world has never had a greater friend to true culture and true education than Jesus. He was himself an educated man in the true sense of the words, a diligent and acute student alike of books and of men. More than this, he was a profound thinker, or to use a still more exact word, a seer, one whose thought lingered not on the surface, but plunged with wonderful insight to the depths of things. His thinking had, moreover, that marvelous reproductive power which is characteristic of only the ablest thinking. His thought, clothed in a few pregnant words, has set other men to thinking, and has kept them thinking, day after day and year after year. To a marvelous degree he has swayed the thinking of all the centuries since his day, and his thought was never more potent in the thinking of the world than it is at this hour. Jesus Christ has been the world's greatest educator and greatest friend to education. But Jesus did not put his faith in culture and education either as divorced from character or as a basis of character. The men whom he chose to be his apostles were doubtless men of good minds. But they were not men who represented the culture and the cultivation of the day, nor who were devoted to culture and education for

their own sake. They had not the learning of the pharisaic scribe, they had not the social polish of the Sadducee and the Herodian. They included few either of the Josephs of Arimathea or of the Nicodemus' of Jerusalem. They were men who were drawn to him by the attraction of his character and of his teaching, men capable of appreciating moral truth, of absorbing it into their lives, and of living it out in a passionate enthusiasm.

Let me not fail to make it clear that I am not intending to represent Jesus as putting religion and culture in mutual antagonism. If there were time, it would be easy to show that Jesus' conception of religion identifies it in its fundamental spirit with true scholarship. What I am affirming is that Jesus did not find the saving power of the world in intellectuality but in morality, that he put moral force above intellectual culture, made character the root from which cultivation and education were to spring, not culture and intellectual training the source of morality.

And history has gone on to prove that Jesus was right. Wherever there have been true religion and high character, there have followed culture and education. The church has brought the schoolhouse. Conversion has been followed by intellectual quickening and broad culture. But whenever culture has been divorced from morality, whenever men in their intellectual pride have believed themselves to have outlived the need of morality and religion,

then there have speedily followed corruption, decay, disaster. And the most desperate vice, the most revolting, putrefying corruption, has been found in cultivated society which has thrown off the restraints of morality. Old Pompeii, buried in the ashes of Vesuvius, preserved for centuries to tell in our own day the unvarnished tale of her culture and corruption, modern Paris and London and New York can tell us tales of revolting rottenness, of despicable and desperate wickedness, such as make the savagery of savage tribes untouched by culture and education seem like puritanic righteousness.

Again there is a tendency—and this particularly among religious people—to believe that religious institutions will save us. Jesus lived in a nation excessively devoted to religion. The golden roof of its temple in Jerusalem flashed back the rays of the eastern sun, and from its great altar the smoke of its sacrifices rose continually. The city, moreover, was full of synagogues, where the Law was read and expounded, and scarcely a hamlet in the land but maintained its synagogue worship. Jesus did not antagonize these things, but neither did he spend any of his force in the attempt to build them up. He began farther back. To him forms of worship, institutions of religion, signified nothing unless they had their source in a state of heart. When they asked why he did not teach his disciples to fast, he answered, in effect: Forms that express no inner fact are useless. To my disciples I am imparting a

new spirit, which will by its own power break asunder all old forms, and make its own new forms. I am concerned only with the spirit.

Jesus put little faith in religious institutions as a preservative force in human society. The men to whom he said, "Ye are the salt of the earth," were not the representatives of temple or synagogue; they were neither rabbis nor priests. They were men humble and obscure but capable of receiving moral truth and of transmuting it under the stimulus of his presence into moral character. Jesus put his faith, not in religious institutions, but in the personal character of religious men.

And again history has gone on to prove him right. The cathedrals of the world have been surrounded to their very doorsteps with the poverty and the wretchedness and the wickedness of humanity. Wherever men have laid stress upon religious institutions in the place of right character, those institutions themselves have become a source of corruption and a deadening influence in the community. But a single human life filled with the Spirit of Christ becomes a center of moral power, and makes for itself a moral oasis in the midst of the desert of sin.

2. A second proposition which is virtually involved in the teaching of Jesus is this: The only force that can make men and women influential for good is good character. This again we all accept in theory, but are prone to ignore and forget it.

For example, we are inclined to feel that a Christian profession is itself effective; that simply to take the name of Christian is itself somehow to exert a good influence in the world. Jesus held the precise opposite. In the words, "If the salt have lost its savor . . . . it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men," he expresses his estimate of the value of a merely nominal Christianity. It is good for nothing except to be rejected and despised. And however the world may differ from Jesus in its estimate of the forces that preserve society, it agrees with him in his estimate of the worthlessness of merely nominal religion. The world rejects and despises it. Thank God it is so. To make it otherwise would be to set one more obstacle in the way of the progress of real Christianity. For there is no more real foe to mankind or to Christianity than a merely nominal Christianity—the salt that still bears the name of salt, but has lost its savor.

Did you ever read the story of Besolow the African Prince? This young African grew up almost to manhood in the heart of Africa in the life of the tribe of which his father was the chief, without ever having heard of Christ or Christianity. In a little book which he published after his coming to America and his conversion to Christianity, he tells with plainest simplicity the story of that life in Africa. There is much that is dark and brutal in it—surely it is very far below the life that is lived

where true Christianity prevails and shapes the life. But I confess that as I read that simple story the thought that forced itself upon me most prominently was this: Such a life as that with all its coarseness and its rudeness is better—in all essential respects better—than much of that selfish and self-centered living which prevails in Christian lands, and sometimes even calls itself Christian. Better the natural darkness of nature-worship than the unnatural sinning against light, which easily assumes to itself the name of Christian, while utterly devoid of its life and power.

But some who will not maintain that the name of Christian carries with it the power of Christianity still cling to the thought that outwardly respectable conduct is enough to give one the power of a Christian in the world. But the words of Jesus are opposed to this thought also. The salt that has lost its savor looks like salt, but it has no power; it is fit only for rejection and contempt.

And again experience shows that Jesus is right. Some years ago a man who had held an important position in the Christian church was discovered to have been for years living a grossly immoral life. Two men who had known him were speaking of the fact. And one of them said, "I cannot understand it. That man always seemed to me a man of singular purity and nobleness of character." And the other answered, "I cannot understand how you could have judged him thus. Never did I look into the face of

that man but my very flesh did creep with abhorrence, and when I heard him read the Bible I felt as if the sacred words had been desecrated by his voice, and the sacred book soiled by his touch." There is a shrewd saying of Abraham Lincoln, applied by him to politics, but equally applicable to morals: "You can fool all the people some of the time; you can fool some of the people all of the time; but you cannot fool all the people all the time." So an outwardly respectable life may deceive some people for a time, but so often has it happened that some people saw through the disguise all the time, and that in the end the garment of deception was completely stripped away, that it has become almost a proverb among men that the character of a man, and not his outward action, determines the effect of his life.

3. A third proposition which is at least suggested by these homely words of Jesus is this: The good men and women who are to save human society from decay and corruption, keep it morally sweet and pure, must come into touch with the world which they would save. Salt in the salt-cellar, in the barrel, in the sea, preserves no food. I shall not insist that this is an intended part of the teaching of these words of Jesus. I am content to claim that the words suggest it and that Jesus has elsewhere taught the lesson alike by explicit precept and by example. He sent his disciples into the very homes of those that were to be reached. He himself lived among men and in closest contact with

men. The very fact of the incarnation—the name Immanuel which the Gospels apply to him, "God with us"—is a reminder of the fact that the Savior of men must live among men. The gospel has rarely been successfully preached by long-distance telephone. The world could never be saved by an absentee God, nor by an absentee church.

The disciples of Jesus have sometimes lost sight of this fact. The mediaeval monk withdrew into his cloister to save his soul from harmful contact with the world's evil. Sometimes the modern saint builds himself an elegant palace or a comfortable home and almost as effectually withdraws from saving contact with the world that is to be saved. Somehow we must touch the world if we would save it.

How then shall we acquire that character that will give us saving power in the world? Does it come by heredity? A good ancestry is a great asset; but, alas, how many sons of righteous men have been themselves devoid of moral power, corrupters of society rather than saviors of men! Is it the product of environment and education? The influences that surround us powerfully affect us; but not in them is the secret of character or moral power. Will resolution or volition make me what I ought to be and wish to be? No man ever became good without the action of his own will and the exertion of all the moral power of which he is capable; but no man ever achieved more than a partial and unsatisfactory success in an effort to save himself. The

apostle Paul demonstrated sufficiently for all time the futility of this method. When heredity and environment and resolution and volition have done their utmost there must still be added a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. It is the eternal God entering into gracious partnership with us that alone can create in us that character which will both save us and enable us to be saviors to others.

And the surest path the world has ever found to saving fellowship with God is through discipleship to his Son Jesus Christ. The men to whom Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth," were his disciples. It was to them as his disciples that he said these words. We do not need to deny the value of the teachings or influence of Moses or Zoroaster or Confucius. They have done their work, and in large part it was a good work. But the greatest character-producing force that has ever come into human history is Jesus Christ. He it was that brought into being that great religious movement which we call, by his name, Christianity, and which, with all its defects, has wrought so mightily for the advancement of human welfare, the ennobling of human life, the elevation of human society; and the most potent influence in the world today for producing pure and noble character is Jesus Christ, the God-revealing Son of God.

Would you be an effective power for the moral betterment of the world, a force making for all that

is good and ennobling, then you must first of all be yourself pure and strong within. The salt without savor is both powerless and contemptible. Would you then possess the character without which no activity, however strenuous, will make you in the long run a force for good in the world, sit first at the feet of Jesus, take his yoke upon you and learn of him; enlist under his captaincy, surrender your soul to his Spirit, learn to say with the apostle Paul, "It is no longer I that live but Christ that liveth in me." So shall you be of those to whom it can be said, "Ye are the salt of the earth."

PRAYER

We give thee thanks, O Heavenly Father, not only for the pleasures of life, but for its tasks and its responsibilities. Believing in the Father who worketh even until now, upholding, redeeming, saving, and in his Son, who could say, "And I work," we rejoice to be workers together with God and followers of Jesus Christ. By thy Spirit, make us true disciples of Christ, pure in heart, hungry and thirsty after righteousness, that so we may be, by our very presence in the world, a power to sweeten human society and to save human souls. May we ever abide in thee, and so bring forth much fruit, even the peaceable fruits of righteousness. In the name of Jesus Christ our Master, we ask it. AMEN.

III

MANUFACTURED GODS

BY

SHAILER MATHEWS

Of the residue thereof he maketh a god. . . . .

He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? (Isa. 44:17, 20).

Sometimes an idol marks the rise of spiritual power. When primitive men come to see that the power on which they depend is not as impersonal as they have believed, and so begin to fashion their idea of God in the form of a man, there begins a new epoch in their religion. But at other times an idol marks the decline of religious zeal—the destruction of spiritual power. It is this feature of idolatry of which the prophet spoke, and that to which I would direct your thought.

The ancient world believed that a god went with his people to war. When, therefore, a people had been conquered, the implication was clear that its god had been conquered. The Hebrews had passed through a succession of extraordinary misfortunes, culminating in their subjection to the people of the North. Yet they had been told by their prophets to trust Jehovah. In their imperfect fashion they had trusted. And then they found themselves in captivity to conquerors who worshiped idols. What more natural than that there should creep over their minds, sick with defeat, the suspicion that

their God Jehovah was not so mighty as those cruel war-gods of Assyria? What more natural than that they should turn to the worship of the conquering gods who were so concrete, and distrust the God they had never seen, whose law was so severely righteous, and whose aid had apparently been useless? So they began to turn from Jehovah, to the gods which were real, and tangible, and successful. They began to manufacture gods out of that which was real and useful. The God who was Spirit had failed; the gods who were of wood should be worshiped.

The strong words of the prophet relate how one of these men who had lost confidence in the spiritual God of Abraham went out to the hillside, felled a tree, and cut the trunk up into parts. One of these he used for baking meat, another he used for baking bread, another he used to make a fire to warm himself, and the rest of the log he made into a god—a god made out of left-over firewood.

Of course such lapse from a spiritual faith seems far away in the past, but the attitude of mind it indicates is by no means ancient. This distrust of the ability of spiritual power, this conviction that in some way a man may make a more efficient substitute for the unseen and often apparently weak God of our fathers' faith, is by no means confined to the days of the Hebrew prophets. For what do we mean by God? Is it not that to which we appeal for the justification of our desires, the court of last appeal

for a conscience? We are all in danger of doing exactly as the man of the olden time—of taking something very concrete, very real, and from it making this court of last appeal, thereby turning from the God of Jesus to the god of utility. Whatever God we may have on Sunday, whatever God we may have in our creeds, there are few of us who are not in danger of manufacturing a god for practical purposes. And every such attempt at the manufacture of gods is a testimony to our distrust of the finality of the spiritual order, to our suspicion that truth and virtue, justice and fraternity, love and sacrifice are not after all the eternal things of life; that the God whom Jesus reveals is too severe for practical purposes.

Sometimes we distrust the very fundamental sanity of the universe and erect Chance into a sort of god. Of course we do not make idols in a literal sense. True, we have Billikins, but Billikins are not idols! True, we do not really believe in mascots—but how should we ever hope to win any conflict, from football to politics, without a mascot? True, we dislike to sit thirteen at table, but this is from the regard of the feelings of some one of the thirteen! True, we dislike to say that we are very prosperous or that our children are well, without rapping three times on wood; but that is only to make sure that some misfortune does not overtake us! No, these customs are not idolatrous—they are only silly.

Yet on second thought they are worse than silly. Each is evidence that men are ready to act as if the universe were not rationally ordered—an aspect of that distrust of God which the gambler shows. And whenever a man thus substitutes chance for reason, luck for purpose, and a gambler's odds for definite planning, the rational universe reaches over and ruins him. Other vices are in a way a prostitution of powers which are natural and desirable for life. The gambler looks into the face of the great universe and declares it a freak, without reason, mere chance. And therefore the life most difficult to reconstruct into any sort of moral worth is the life of the gambler. He makes a god of Chance, and Mischance rules him, body and soul. He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath led him astray, so that he cannot say, "Have I not a lie in my right hand?"

But those of us who are above this insanity of trusting to chance too often make a god out of the very things which are of great value in themselves —things of the utmost utility in life as we live it.

There is business, for example. No man would belittle our commercial activity. The great monuments of our wonderful civilization are due to commerce. Our arts, our sciences, and our splendid institutions—these are all the blossoming-forth of the capacity of men to get wealth. Yet one can clearly see that when a person erects business into a court of final appeal in matters of morals and

substitutes the laws of trade for the Sermon on the Mount, he is publishing his distrust of the ethics of Jesus.

You manufacture a god to get permission to do the things which our real God forbids you to do. When a man says that this or that principle is not applicable to business in face of the fact that his Christian conscience tells him it is right, he is making a god to justify himself. A man once said to me, "I am just as much interested in ideal things as you are, but in my business it is not always possible to do the ideal thing." But what is this but saying that business has been erected into a court of appeal intended to displace the court established by Jesus and by God? He is manufacturing a god, an idol, out of something useful in its sphere but never intended to be the final court of moral appeal, never intended to be a god. And the penalty is inevitable—he loses the power of moral insight. He cannot see that he has a lie in his right hand.

Then there is the god of Social Convention. Social conventions are a most admirable necessity of life. How should we live the social life if not for these conventions? By them we know how many cards to leave when making a call, when to make our calls, what time our friends may reasonably be expected to wish to receive a call. What should we do without the countless other customs of life? They are the lubricants of our social machinery.

But we cannot safely make a god of social convention to whom we make our final moral appeal. We know perfectly well that many customs do not tally with our ideals. We go shamefacedly to places of amusement, read certain books, wear strange fashions in clothes, dance suggestive dances. Everybody does it, why should not we? "Everybody does it"—as if custom made everything right! Children array themselves against their parents' advice, believing that what everybody does is right. Men and women violate their best impulses and plead the same justification.

But no one ever erects that sort of god and elects to worship him without finding his moral idealism growing weaker. The worship of every second-hand god always weakens the worshiper's capacity to make moral distinctions. He who erects any god to justify desires which the God of Jesus will not justify finds his moral fiber weakened by the very law of life. But there is no god whose worship is more debilitating than the god—"Everybody does it."

We make a god of Culture. Far be it from anybody to belittle culture. To be able to appreciate real music as over against ragtime; to love real pictures rather than the vulgarities of the comic supplement; to appreciate real literature instead of the inanities of the popular fiction; to see that life is full of the laws of beauty and to enter into sympathy with those laws; to grow keen-eyed and

strong; to have fellowship with that which is true and beautiful and of good repute—these are some of the gifts of true culture. The mere ability to do the conventional thing is not necessarily culture. Learning is not culture. Some of the most learned people have manners for which you have to apologize.

But to honor culture may be to fashion one of the great idols of our modern world. For it may spring from the distrust of spiritual standards.

I was once discussing the realities of art and morality with a certain actor. He insisted that there was no relation between the two, that a good play could be written on any subject. I did not agree with him and said to him, "Do you mean to say that you can write a play, say, on the subject of a garbage can?" He was a trifle dismayed, but was true to his logic, declaring that it could be done. In view of some of the plays which he produces, I am inclined to think that he practices what he believes. But what of our moral sense? To think that we may discuss every topic under heaven provided only we discuss it artistically or with good technique is to blunt the minds of the people to moral distinctions so that they cannot tell light from darkness.

Moral vulgarity often comes to us so alluringly through charming music, delicate literary style, exquisite artistic technique, that we are in danger of becoming artistically and technically skilled instead of being morally virile. Experience ought

to convince us that this means moral decay. Wherever you see a soul beginning to substitute mere interest in culture for virile interest in moral life, there you will see a soul erecting a new sort of god who will permit him to act, think, and enjoy and ultimately believe that which the God of Jesus will not tolerate. For in the case of culture as in that of business and social convention we do not create gods to make morals sterner, but looser.

Sometimes we manufacture a god out of the noblest and most precious material—the god of Social Service. Far be it from me to speak a word except of heartfelt admiration for that new attitude of helpfulness which marks our age. To have had any part in setting forth to the world the social significance of Christianity is one of the elements of life of which a man may well be proud. But to make social service an expression of religion is one thing; to make it a substitute for God is another. So to love the heavenly Father as to enter into fraternity with your earthly brother—that is the heart of the ethics of Jesus. But to hold that there is no immorality, no right or wrong; that life has nothing but universal misery; and that in this service of misery one has the only possible God, is the heart of an altruistic pessimism. I have known people of that sort. I honor them highly but I pity them more. For to render service without some great spiritual enthusiasm is a poor substitute for the gospel with its saving God.

of earthly interests. Grant to our hearts, so often distracted by the appeal of immediate success, the serenity of those who obey thy laws and trust in thy redeeming love. And help us day by day to consecrate our lives to thy service, that in thy fellowship we may learn to love thee as our Father and our neighbor as our brother. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

IV

THE PROPHETIC ATTITUDE IN RELIGION

BY

J. M. POWIS SMITH

THE PROPHETIC ATTITUDE IN RELIGION

Would that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put his spirit upon them (Num. 11:29).

In the narrative to which the text belongs, the magnanimity of Moses is given a perfect setting. In accordance with the command of Jehovah, Moses is said to have chosen seventy men from among the elders of Israel and to have assembled them in the immediate vicinity of the Tent of Meeting. Thereupon, the Spirit of Jehovah had come down upon Moses and had been transferred from him to the seventy elders. These had at once begun to prophesy. Meantime, two men who had been selected to go to the Tent of Meeting and had not gone, but had remained behind in the camp, were reported to Moses as having likewise received the Spirit of Jehovah and as having begun to prophesy among the people in the camp. Impulsively, Joshua, the minister of Moses, solicitous for the honor and authority of his master, which seemed to be set at naught by such procedure, besought Moses to put an end to such lawless doings: "My lord Moses, forbid them." The greatness of Moses lifts him above petty, personal considerations and enables him to say, "Art thou jealous for my sake? Would God that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put his spirit upon them." Pleasing and profitable as is the contemplation of

such submergence of self in the higher interests of a great cause, I wish to invite your attention at this time to the consideration of another line of thought suggested by the text, viz., the value of the prophetic spirit and attitude in religion.

Modern Bible-study has revolutionized our conceptions of the nature and work of the prophet. He is no longer looked upon as a wholly incomprehensible, mystical being, standing half-way between earth and heaven and belonging to neither. He is not one to whom Jehovah, in some psychologically unintelligible manner, imparted knowledge, concerned partly indeed with the prophet's own age, but in far larger part dealing with the distant future, centuries beyond the prophet's own day. He was rather a genuine man, and all his interests, activities, and capacities were such as are common to man. He lived and worked among the men of his own day; his preaching was primarily to and for them; he called them to repentance and threatened them with punishment, or encouraged them with promises to be fulfilled during their life here upon earth. He got his message as men of God have received their call and their commission through all the ages. He read the will of Jehovah in the movements of world-history, in the events and conditions of his own day, and in the promptings of his own heart and conscience.

It was characteristic of the race to which he belonged to see God everywhere. They heard

God's voice in the roar of the wind and the crash of the thunder. They saw his blazing wrath in the flash of the lightning. God was not for them at the end of a syllogism; he was the major premise, the basal fact of all thought and life. God was not to be argued about, but taken for granted as the most real and forceful personality in the universe. The world apart from God was for them unthinkable. It was this feeling for God, this deep-seated conviction of his existence, this living consciousness of his presence in, and power over, his world, that made prophecy possible. Out of the great mass of the people at large who were dominated by this thought of God there arose from time to time in Israel's history great individuals through whom the higher truths of God were mediated to the masses. These were the prophets, men of wide intelligence and keen insight, alert to all that was going on about them and seeking to interpret it all from the standpoint of God. These men of seeing eye and listening ear, wondrously sensitive to the presence of God, knew themselves to be in such immediate and personal contact with him and so cognizant of the divine will that they had not the slightest hesitation in representing themselves as the spokesmen of Jehovah, saying, "thus saith Jehovah." This constant listening for the divine message, this consciousness of direct communication with God, this assurance of fellowship between the individual soul and the world-soul, was the secret of the power

of prophecy and the indispensable prerequisite to the exercise of this highest of all spiritual functions.

Prophecy, however, ran its course in Israel and ceased to be. Its thought of God as ever present in his world and ever seeking to reveal himself to those able to receive the revelation was forced into the background. In its place, there came the rule of the priests. These brought to the fore the thought of God as majestic and holy and thus separated from his worshipers by a gulf impassable. Access to him became ever more and more difficult and was possible only through a most rigid and elaborate ritual performed by a specially sanctified and consecrated priesthood acting as mediator between God and man. The will of God was thought of as having been revealed once for all in the sacred law, the interpretation of which was the special prerogative of the priests and scribes. Within the limits of this law and ritual many devout souls kept their religious life aglow with zeal and devotion, but they constituted a minority. For the masses, the law with its almost innumerable enactments, expanded and elaborated by tradition so as to extend into and control every sphere of thought and life, reduced religion to a cold and formal legalism. The typical representatives of the religion thus reduced to its lowest terms are the Pharisees of the New Testament period.

Into a religious society so constituted came Jesus and kindled into new life the prophetic thought

of God. In this, as in other respects, he was the true descendant of the prophets. No one can read the records of the life of Jesus and escape the fact that he felt himself to be in immediate touch with his heavenly Father. He was God's child in his Father's world. The sense of the sustaining presence of God appears in every action and in his whole attitude toward life. Tradition recognizes this fact in the records of the Baptism and the Transfiguration. His constant recourse to prayer as a method of communion with God witnesses to his sense of the divine fellowship, and even the despairing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is a measure of the reality and genuineness of his dependence upon the divine love and strength. But he did not leave us to learn by inference only concerning this phase of his thought of God. His utterances upon the subject are clear and unmistakable. For example, he distinctly repudiated the idea that the Mosaic law was the complete expression of the will of God and that the channel of revelation was therefore closed. Indeed, he did not hesitate at times to set aside the law of Moses and supersede it with a new law. "Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." The same independence of the law and consciousness of right appear in the

story of the woman taken in adultery. He even seems to have taken particular pains to guard against the possibility of his disciples and followers looking upon the revelation that had come through himself as final. He sought rather to keep alive in them the expectation of further and fuller revelations by the assurance of the coming of the Holy Spirit. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall lead you into all truth." And again, "It is necessary for you that I go away; but if I go away, I will send the Comforter unto you." Necessary? What an astonishing statement! Why necessary? Doubtless, lest they should come to put the human Jesus between themselves and God. Nothing must be permitted to intervene between the soul and its Maker. The very life of religion depends upon free and unrestricted intercourse between the worshiper and his God.

Just as the prophets had introduced the most creative epoch in the thought and religion of Israel, so the teaching and example of Jesus gave rise to another and greater creative epoch, of which the writings of the New Testament were the literary outcome and the Christian church was the social expression. Yet mankind seems unable to remain for long on the highest levels. As the Jewish people had fallen away from the ideals of the prophets, even so the Christian church was unable to main-

tain the ideals of Jesus and the apostles. The thought that God is in personal touch with each individual, and that to each and every one may come inspiration and instruction direct from God himself, apart from the mediation of any priesthood or any written revelation, was too lofty and spiritual an ideal to find a permanent home in the minds of men. Mankind is always seeking for some kind of visible, external, and tangible authority to which all difficult problems may be referred for final settlement. It is comparatively easy to do the right, if one can but learn from some authoritative source just what is right. There is no higher or more difficult function of the soul than that of the discovery of truth and right for itself. In estimating values in the realm of morals and religion, in weighing all the elements in an ethical or spiritual problem for the purpose of discovering the right way out, is found the exercise of man's noblest powers. This exercise demands and develops spiritual insight and discrimination, self-sacrificing devotion to truth and righteousness, and patient continuance in well-doing. Men have naturally shrunk from this hard task and have sought to shift the burden of responsibility from themselves and to place it elsewhere. How pathetically eager Christians have ever been to trade this their God-given birthright for a mess of pottage! Instead of the inestimable privilege of exercising lordship over their own souls in things religious, they have clamorously insisted upon

taking orders from others. "Call no man master," says the gospel, "for *one* is your master, even Christ."

Thus it came about within a comparatively short time after the days of the apostles that the authority which rightly belongs to each individual over his own beliefs and actions was gathered up and transferred to the church as an organization. The decrees of councils took the place of conscience; the voice of the church became the voice of God. The priest was exalted to the place of God and direct access to the Father was denied to the children. This tendency found its logical goal in the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope and today the vast majority of Christendom looks to him, the visible "head of the church," for the final statement of the will of the invisible God.

Because of the manifest corruption and glaring wickedness of the priestly hierarchy and the popes of the mediaeval church, here and there men of spiritual insight and power, like Wycliffe, John Huss, and Luther, broke away from the church and the tradition of its authority over the soul of the individual. As a result of their courage and independence, we have the great Protestant movement and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. But the Protestant reform after all, in a certain sense, brought about only a change of masters. It substituted a book for a man. The authority and infallibility of the church and the pope gave place to

the authority and infallibility of the Bible. In so far as this has resulted in increased attention to, and appreciation of, the Scriptures it has been of course a blessing of inestimable value. The Bible is the record of the richest religious experience of all time. It tells us what the most spiritually minded of all men have thought about God and duty. It furnishes inspiration and counsel in the constant warfare against sin and the imperative struggle toward righteousness. It is an unfailing source of light and leading. But its very strength is at the same time a source of danger. Its supreme value easily leads us to assign to it an undue emphasis in our thought. We come to look upon it as the full and final revelation of God unto his world and his church. We stop short with the Bible, forgetting that the proper function of the Bible is to lead us to God. It should teach us to keep our spiritual eyes open and our ears unstopped, that like the prophets of old we may be constantly on the alert for every manifestation of God through whatever channel he may reveal himself. I would not minimize the place of the Bible in the enrichment of thought and upbuilding of character; I would rather magnify the necessity of reproducing in our own experience the prophetic thought of the nearness of God and the prophetic attitude toward God's constant revelation of himself. Without these, the Bible never could have been produced; with these, all things are possible unto us.

Signs are not wanting of a return on the part of the present age toward the prophetic attitude in religion. Among these, three are of especial significance. The first of them is a certain unmistakable restlessness under authority in the realm of spiritual things. Names and labels no longer carry much weight with us. Every candidate for admission into the circle of our religious and moral convictions must present credentials that satisfy the demands of our reason and of our moral and spiritual natures. It is not enough for us to know that the applicant brings with him the indorsement of previous generations. Tradition and antiquity are not enough. Insurgency is in the air. Progress is our watchword. Old institutions and old ideas must submit themselves to the most thoroughgoing investigation, if they wish to command our respect and allegiance. Science, philosophy, medicine, politics, law, and business are all being made over in these days. New methods and points of view obtain in every department of human interest. We live in a new world. Old things have passed away, in so far as they had nothing more than age to recommend them. Religion cannot hope and should not desire to escape the influence of the same spirit of independence. It has everything to gain and nothing to lose by throwing open all the doors for a full and free investigation of its traditions. It is the part of true religion to encourage every kind of honest inquiry. The exposure of

error is fatal to ignorance and superstition, but religion becomes the more vigorous the purer the atmosphere in which it develops. The search for truth is the search for God. The old formulas do not and cannot contain all the truth. God has yet more truth to break forth from his word and from his world. His revelation of himself to mankind can never be complete until man has reached his highest development. The progress of the race is painfully slow and the revelation of God is limited thereby. There is constant need of spiritual pioneers, men of truly prophetic insight and passion, to discern and justify the ways of God to men. New and tremendous problems are pressing for solution. The old answers no longer suffice. Who will show us the new way? Where is the modern prophet? "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!"

Another evidence that a prophetic spirit is stirring in the land is to be seen in the rise of a new ethical sense in the present day. The great glory of the prophets of Israel was their passion for righteousness. Along this line were their greatest advances made. As the political power of Israel dwindled, their conception of God became broader. Just when his people were in danger of ceasing to exist, the prophets presented him as the God of the world. This achievement was possible for them because they persisted in thinking of Jehovah, not as the God of Israel merely, but as the God of

righteousness; and righteousness knows no national limitations. In like manner, *all* their approach to truth was along moral lines. Their triumphs in this sphere were not those of the speculative, metaphysical philosopher. They were victories of the heart rather than of the brain. In the expanding social order of their times, as the commercial and social life became more and more complex and elaborate, the old laws and customs were proving inadequate. The poor were rapidly becoming poorer and the rich richer. The cry of the oppressed went up to heaven. The prophets appeared as the champions of the poor, and, blazing with moral indignation, they denounced the avarice and cruelty of the rich. They preached a code of individual and social ethics which penetrated far deeper than the accepted standards of their day. They were looked upon as impracticable idealists, subverters of the social order. But their ideals have set the standard for all succeeding ages. Thinking men in every department of the life of this modern world are keenly conscious of the need of a similar work. The standard of individual morals must not only be lifted to a higher level, but that standard must be socialized. The yawning gap between personal morality on the one hand and business and political morality on the other must be bridged over. The moral sense of the day protests against the exploitation of the many for the enrichment of the few. "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God

created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" On this platform a new race of prophets is arising, passionate pleaders for social righteousness. May they not, like the prophets of old, find us a people who hear indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not; whose hearts are fat and their ears heavy and their eyes shut. Let us remember that not the wise, nor the mighty, but "the pure in heart shall see God."

The third proof that our age is characterized by something of the prophetic spirit is furnished by the modern emphasis upon the thought of the indwelling God. We can no longer think of him as outside and apart from his world. We can no longer look for the evidence of God's interest in, and care for, his world to miraculous and abnormal phenomena in the realms of nature and history, nor think of God as in any way breaking in upon the order of the universe. Science, psychology, philosophy, and historical criticism have reduced the element of the supranatural to the vanishing-point. He who would stake his faith in God upon phenomena of this kind finds his God confined to an ever-narrowing circle of influence. Such a one attempting to check the progress of modern thought in this direction is pledged to a forlorn hope. He who cannot find God in *all* the phenomena of life is in constant danger of losing his God. The thought of the present age concerning God is rather that of his presence in and through all of his universe. He is

the indwelling personality who gives direction and meaning to it all.

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God,
> But only he who sees takes off his shoes.

God is in us; he is life of our life and spirit of our spirit. He permeates every fiber of our being. "In him we live and move and have our being; for we are also his offspring." He is our spiritual atmosphere; he is our strength and stay. Without him we can do nothing.

When this sense of God's nearness to us and of our nearness to him takes hold of us as it did of the prophets of old; when their passion for social righteousness gets into our blood; when their attitude of expectancy and hospitality toward new truth becomes ours, then may we too become prophets. Never was the need of God-filled men greater than it is today. Never was the task of interpreting the world in terms of God more difficult or more fascinating than it is today. Never was God more ready to declare his will unto his servants than he is today. We may not, indeed, call the prophets again from the dead; nor may we seek to reproduce their methods and manners in our own age. They have "had their day and ceased to be." But their spirit abides and will take unto itself new forms and agencies. It is ours to let that spirit take complete possession of our souls and work in and through us the will of God.

PRAYER

Almighty God, Father of our spirits, we thank thee for the sacred privilege of fellowship with thyself. We pray thee, fit us for more perfect sympathy with thy purposes; pardon our infirmities and purge away our sins; cleanse us and keep us clean. Make us more worthy of the high calling wherewith we are called as sons of God. Help us to take up the unfinished tasks of those who have gone before us. Give unto us courage and joy in the doing of the world's work and help us to glorify it all in the thought that we are fellow-workers with thee. Thou lover of men, open our hearts to the incoming of every noble impulse and high motive and send us forth as bearers of the gospel of helpfulness and love. Make us willing to spend and be spent in the service of thy Kingdom, after the manner of him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. Strengthen our faith in men and our trust in thyself, granting us the never-failing assurance that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. These petitions and those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot, ask, vouchsafe to grant unto us out of thine own unchanging mercy and unceasing love. AMEN.

V

THE TEST OF RELIGION

BY

JAMES HAYDEN TUFTS

THE TEST OF RELIGION

Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul,
O, my God, in thee have I trusted,
Let me not be put to shame.
(Ps. 25:1, 2.)

Ever since man's intelligence has lifted him to a life of imagination and thought, as well as of sense and feeling, the struggle for existence has taken on for him a larger significance than it has for the brute. He does not adapt himself so passively to nature; he is in a sense "nature's insurgent son." He fashions his actions in some degree by ideas of past or future. He summons to his aid not only the co-operation of his kin, but the protection of the very forces that oppose him. With magic and ritual, with sacrifice and prayer, he compels or entreats. He enters into sympathy and co-operation with the unseen. He lifts up his soul. He trusts in a Helper. He seeks salvation. He would in some sense overcome the world. But while the persistent effort remains, the sort of salvation he needs and the sort of co-operation he would gain vary with the man's ideal. The test he applies will vary likewise. To appreciate what may be called the modern test we may contrast it with some of the earlier tests man has proposed.

I

1. The earliest need man felt was naturally that for food and shelter, for protection against foes of famine and pestilence, darkness and storm, or the often more pressing enemies of hostile tribes.

What, under these conditions, was the test of religion? The religion that brought victory over enemies, that brought health, that gave good luck in the hunt or sent the rains that made the land yield her increase, that guarded from the pestilence in darkness or the destruction at noonday—this was the religion man craved in early time. Greek or Semite, American Indian or Australian black tested his religion by its ability to give such help. The god that answereth by fire, he is the god; the Lord of Hosts is the helper. And the test works both ways: the man who prospers in all these ways is sure that the Lord is with him. Success is the test of piety and faith; calamity or defeat is evidence of sin, or of failure to unite forces with God.

But in time man came to feel new needs. The old tests no longer satisfied. New kinds of conflict arose which the older religion could not put to rest. Out of the stress and anguish of these crises came a vision of a higher world than man had known before. To enter this new world a new religion was needed. A far subtler conception of salvation made its way into human consciousness. A new kind of aid was required. New tests replaced the old. The older and simpler religion broke down at two points:

It broke down as a means of getting nature's aid or as a protection against the dangers from nature and man. It did not give the worshiper sure harvests or safe voyages. The flight of birds or the freshly opened bodies of victims failed to inspire confidence as revelation of God's will. Asshur did not protect Nineveh, nor Bel Babylon, nor Jehovah Jerusalem, nor Athena Athens. And finally the Eternal City of Mars, of Jove, and of all the pantheon was sacked.

And on the other hand, the man who sought to follow the guidance of right in his relations to his fellows—he likewise might fail to gain the blessing of God. Though he gave his bread to the fatherless and upheld justice in the gate he might perish. Which, then, should he trust, conscience or religion? In such a crisis many would stand by the older view of religion and go after any who promised prosperity. But a Job would hold fast to his integrity and an Amos and a Hosea would find a new religion which put justice and mercy before sacrifice.

Out of the collisions and wreckage of these older forms and the breakdown of the earlier tests came gradually higher types of religion, in Europe and in Asia.

2. Corresponding to that aspect of religion which sought to control nature through magic or mystic union, there emerged the methods of scientific thought. Astronomy began to guide the sailor, medicine to understand and sometimes to heal

disease. Mathematics was for Plato a surer path to the divine than the religious myth of the poets. The life of plants and animals, the practice of the creative artisan or creative poet gave Aristotle his clue to the nature of God; and, above all, the splendor of the new world rose into man's vision. The universe lay open to him who had the key of logical method. It was a universe of order, of law, of consistent reason.

For more than a thousand years, though submerged from time to time by waves of ignorance, this seemed to many of the choicest minds the true realm of religion. Reason is man's diviner life, say Plato and Aristotle, St. Thomas and Spinoza. In comparison with this, the life of sense belongs to our animal and mortal part. Let man put off his mortality and find God in the immortal and changeless realm of thought. Let him find the beatific vision in the contemplative life. Let him view all things under the aspect of eternity. Nor can we forget the eloquent words of the modern expounder of this view:

> In religion we withdraw from what is temporal—religion is for our consciousness that region in which all the enigmas of the world are solved, all the contradictions of deeper-reaching thought have their meaning unveiled, and where the voice of the heart's pain is silenced—the region of eternal truth, of eternal rest, of eternal peace.

Religion of this sort finds in God a cause, a substance, an absolute. It seeks to view all things from

the standpoint of eternity. Its test is that of logical consistency.

3. While the thinker seeks to rise above the world of sense on wings of thought, another pilgrim climbs step by step a stony path to the divine. Not the illusions and perplexities of the universe, but the passions and lusts within the soul, vex and baffle him. "Satan" symbolizes an adversary more active and dangerous than "Chaos." Persian, Indian, Greek, and Christian seek helper and companion in these conflicts. The way upward is steep, but it too, no less than the soaring flight of reason, yields visions. The higher world of God lies beyond, and a Paul or a Saint Bernard catches glimpses of its splendor. For such a religion desires and passions, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, are the deadly foes. They blind the vision; they fetter the aspiring soul; they shut him away from God. Only by freeing himself as far as may be from these can he enter the presence of the pure and holy. Fast and vigil, poverty, chastity, renunciation, mortification of the body—these form the *via crucis*, which is the *via lucis*. And for the saint of this type of religion the test will be: Have I completely escaped the vanities and deceptions of this sham world? Have I ceased to lust and to will? Have I merged and hid my life in God, and does his spirit in turn give me victory over the world of the flesh and of desire? This is the ascetic's test.

4. But beside the thinker and the saint, another type of man sought another and a different salvation. Man early learned the necessity of government and law if he were to rise above quarreling and enjoy life and peace. But power is often ruthless. Greed and ambition trample on laws. The just perish, the wicked prosper. The seeker for truth is condemned in Athens; the prophets in Judea are stoned. Superhuman help is needed. Unless there is some divine rule, some guiding Providence, some just judge and final appeal, wrong triumphs over right, and all the moral conviction is put to confusion. The political and legal conceptions of religion were the response to this demand: God is the true sovereign of the world. He is the righteous judge. Religion is to do him homage and obey his rule. And in place of the earlier cities and empires the religion of John and of Augustine builds a City of God, a Kingdom of Grace.

Greek, Roman, and Jewish elements found their place in these legal and political conceptions of religion. The Greek projected an ideal city with little hope that it would rise on earth. The Roman thought that in the universal principles of justice implanted in all men is found a revelation of the divine reason. The Jew saw in God not merely the ruler of Israel but the sovereign of all worlds. But in the actual fusion of these elements in the time of savage and barbarous men it was criminal justice which became the determining factor. God was the

almighty judge; man was a rebel. Religion was repentance and submission. Salvation was escape from wrath to come. The test of religion was: Can it take from me the fear of punishment, and give me instead the assurance of a forgiving grace? This was the test for the ages of Dante and of Calvin.

But there was another form of the political and social ideal. National hopes gave rise in the heroic souls of Israel's seers to a grander vision of a kingdom of righteousness not limited to the sons of Abraham. Yet it needed the complete destruction of the earthly Jerusalem and the opposition of the little group of Christian disciples alike to their old countrymen and to Roman power to prepare the way for a union and co-operation of man and his fellows for a purely spiritual end. The older faiths had been national. The essentially new in the idea of the church was that it represented unity of man with man in God. And when Augustine saw the Roman imperial power disintegrate he hailed the coming City of God as the destined end of creation. The church became the earthly way of entrance to this city. Its universal catholic sway embraced the faithful. The test of religion for the individual became obedience to its rule. The test the anxious soul propounded was: Have I been blessed through its sacraments, absolved through its divine commission, included in its saving fold?

5. When the modern world came in, religion, like other forms of human experience, took a more

individual and personal attitude. Personal accountability to God, personal faith, personal salvation, personal regeneration and penitence, an inner light within the soul—these became notes of true religion. With most men there was no intellectual question as to the existence and sovereignty of God. The question was rather as to man's own conscious attitude toward his creator, lawgiver, judge, and redeemer. The cry of the Psalmist, "Let me not be put to shame," as it was repeated by our fathers, sprang from fear that they might be put to shame because of their own deceitful hearts.

As we read the writings of Edwards and his followers or of Wesley and his school we can but appreciate the fervor and intensity of feeling which dwelt within them. It offers a parallel to the emphasis laid upon the affections by the "moral sense" school of contemporary ethical writers. It was perhaps favored by special external conditions which turned the spirit within upon itself. Although the Calvinists conceived God primarily as governor of the universe—of a universe, moreover, in which the great majority of men were through another's act in hopeless enmity, and under certain condemnation to endless misery—they none the less looked for a type of affection appropriate to personal relations. If the object of affection was the divine-human Savior there might be an even more vivid imagery and emotion. In their fear of an external religion of works, or a selfish religion of gain, men of spiritual

temper sought in the "exercises," or "taste," or "experience" of the individual soul the supreme test of the work of God within.

But in the effort to make religion inward there was often a tendency to read inner experience in terms of emotion. Love to God—love disinterested, self-forgetting, and utter—was demanded, and was often tested by "warmth" or "coldness" of heart. Repentance was evidenced by the depth of depression under conviction of sin. Regeneration was known by the joy with which the heart responded to a new hope.

6. But the emotional was not the only test offered by the individual movement. The type we have just considered centered its experience about conceptions of a sovereign God, a broken law, a divine redeemer, and found in man's own heart no element of good save as almighty grace overcame all natural depravity. A deeper insight into the very essence of moral experience disclosed a factor overlooked. "The word that I bring thee this day," we may read Kant's message, "is not far off. It is not in heaven, nor beyond the sea. It is very nigh thee. The voice of duty is in the heart. Its authority is first of all *there*, or it is nowhere." And if the very essence of "I ought" is that I command myself, this lifts man above himself. It shows him, in spite of all his selfishness, as belonging to another world. He himself is sovereign as well as subject. He has found a surer sign than hitherto for the confidence

that he need not be ashamed in his trust. Kant himself did not give to his interpretation of religion the full breadth of the horizon which he had thus disclosed. But in the principle which he established lay the promise of religious faith.

II

What now shall we say is the modern test of religion?

I confess that when I began to write I had in mind to point out chiefly why these older tests had failed—to show that for us of the modern world, religion is not tested without by miracle nor within by emotion, nor even by the intellectual method of logical consistency. But as I reflected upon what each of the successive tests had meant to the men of faith who framed them, I thought I saw in each a truth as well as a defect. And I believe it is possible for us to shape our test, not so much by setting aside these others, as by recognizing what each aimed at and in what respect it failed. Then perhaps we can add what our day may make as its contribution to the common work of those who have walked by faith.

The evident trend of all man's religion has been to come into a larger world; to find in the Great Companion sympathy and support for aspirations and hopes; to overcome evil; to make good and justice prevail. Let us then see how each of the tests we have noticed records some effort.

And first in miracle. This seems to us an impossible way to test the spiritual. That sun should stand still or dead should rise, or lightning flash on the right, would be but physical fact to be explained as such. It would tell nothing of moral character. But to early man it did mean at least that nature was in some sense his friend. It responded somehow to his prayer. It behaved as he would himself behave. But it was a crude and limited conception of the spiritual world which was thus suggested. And the Great Teacher sighed deeply in his spirit when men sought of him a sign from heaven. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead."

We turn then from the test of miracle to its farthest extreme, the test of knowledge. And it is not hard for us moderns to appreciate its profound significance. To search for causes, to organize all nature's variety into classes and finally into one comprehensive system, to bring all scattered events under universal law and banish contradictions—all this was indeed to open a new vision of the universe. The faculty which so manifests its power may well seem man's most divine prerogative. To think God's thoughts after him is to enter into union with the divine. In knowledge man finds the control over nature and the support he needs. The fatal defect in the test as it was applied by scholasticism

was the method of knowledge it pursued. It mistook the scaffolding for the temple, the telescope for the heavens. The principles of causation, of unity, of consistency, or, in modern days, of evolution, are the clues with which we explore; but no analysis of definitions of First Cause, of Pure Being, of Absolute, of Evolution, will take the place of exploration. It is in observation, experiment, and reflection combined that we of today believe we enter into the kingdom of knowledge, and therefore of co-operation with the world of nature and of man. Religion cannot afford to drop this test. Rather it needs to carry it farther, and by more careful penetration into just the religious life of man to give due weight to the most important facts of human life. It is not hard to explain why religion at first sought God in the heavens, and watched with jealous eye the progress of astronomy or geology or biology; the time has now come when we are searching also the mind of man.

I need not dwell long upon the ascetic and mystic tests. We do not enter the hermit's cell nor seek the beatific vision through cutting off all desire and will. And yet the lusts and passions war against the soul and he that would live the life of the spirit must make them its subjects, not its master. This test persists until the ape and tiger die.

Is then the test of religion to be found in the legal conceptions of atonement, forgiveness, and salvation from punishment?

No one who ponders human life will deny the consciousness of guilt, or fail to see how this consciousness has itself helped man to find in a world of justice a higher development, a spiritual life. But the older conceptions of criminal law, born as they were in blood-revenge and sovereignty of force, are not the justice or religion for today. "The very notion," says William James, "that this glorious universe, with planets and winds, and laughing sky and ocean, should have been conceived and had its beams and rafters laid in technicalities of criminality is incredible to our modern imagination. It weakens a religion to hear it argued upon such a basis."

If it be true of law that her seat is the bosom of God, it is religion to seek justice. But we have sometimes forgotten that, like other institutions, law is a mixture of higher and lower. Our justice is in part the divine principles, but it is also in part the work of barbarous times and selfish men. It embodies class interests and vested wrongs, as well as fairness and hard-won rights. The sacredness that belongs only to the one is sometimes invoked for the other. Nor has the other separation been less fatal. Because human government is imperfect and human politics corrupt, the religious man in the past has too often kept aloof. The most hopeful signs of our day to my mind are on the one hand the efforts to make law and government more responsive to all the ideal ends of man, to give him education and sympathetic care as well as to guard his life and property, and

on the other, that good men and women are finding place for their religion in political life. Perhaps never before in the twenty-five centuries since the words were spoken has Micah's first test for religion seemed so vital, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly?"

And lastly we may consider together the two remaining tests we have mentioned, since they seem to represent opposing views. One was membership in a universal corporate body, the other was an inner and personal experience. This latter we certainly shall not give up. The whole scientific spirit of our day urges us to seek what is real and vital in concrete facts of some experience, rather than in general concepts. But it is inadequate to seek this in emotion. Emotion may well be the moment when higher life begins—when the older, narrow self gives way, and one enters into larger reaches of life. But it is only a partial or occasional experience.

Deeper than this is the experience of conscience and duty as the ever-present witness within the soul of its sublimity, as the constant symbol of the actual existence of moral values, as the evidence of horizons yet unreached. The profoundest and most truly religious faith is the faith that "right makes might." It is through this witness of the moral conviction that we get the best interpretation of the test spoken to a generation not yet ready to receive it: He that wills to do God's will shall know.

But how shall one be sure of duty? How shall one know God's will? And is the knowledge—the test—a purely subjective one? In contrast with this there was a great principle beneath the conception of the church. My feelings, your struggles for righteousness, are very likely to go wrong if you and I keep separate from our kind. Above all, in the life of the spirit, recent science emphasizes that social co-operation is necessary. Religion expresses the fact that the deepest spiritual nature is social. Where two or three are met the divine presence is with them. The test of membership in this co-operative union was indeed misapplied when it was taken as a substitute for the others, or when the special ecclesiastical organization, built as it was from Roman empire and oriental magic and Gothic rites, was identified with the spiritual temple. I am not here to argue for any specific form of ecclesiasticism, nor as to whether the church of the future shall even be called by that name. But the test of co-operation, of union in spiritual sympathy and purpose, of loyalty to the cause of the Kingdom of God, of active participation in the efforts to make this kingdom come—this is a modern test.

> See! In the rocks of the world
> Marches the host of mankind,
> A feeble wavering line.
>
> Factions divide them, their host
> Threatens to break, to dissolve.
> Ah, keep, keep them combined!
> Else, of the myriads who fill
> That army, not one shall arrive.

Only under the inspiration of great religious leaders do we feel our need, and quicken into unity and strength. Only thus united shall our march lead

> On, to the bound of the waste.
> On, to the City of God.

VI

THE REVIVAL OF IDEALISM

BY

ALLAN HOBEN

THE REVIVAL OF IDEALISM

Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord—(Hag. 1:8).

Every normal person has at some time cherished a worthy ideal. It may have been flitting, it may have been but for a moment that the spirit flamed white with divine purpose and registered its high resolve. But in the flashlight of that moment a heavenly image was stamped upon the soul. Over against such brief experiences, intermittent and all too few, we have the steady tug of materialism, the monotony and humdrum of life's dusty march. The morning of idealism is followed by the noon of practicality and the evening of reminiscence. Poetry becomes prose and then anecdote. Vision, utility, retrospect—so runs life's story.

We may dispute the fact, we may stamp it as a libel, we may cite exceptions, and they do exist, but our hearts confess the tendency. They know something of this silent tragedy, of forfeiture to convenience, of drooping banners in whose folds high mottoes of the past hide their faces in very shame. Conformity, averages, practicality, subsistence, custom, and a horde of commonplace necessities waylay youthful idealism which must indeed learn the manner of the road but still must ride, and ride on forever.

You recall our first uncalculating faith, how it came all hot and new against the rigid order of things to seek form, reality, habiliments; and how, when it got clothed—if clothed it ever was—it looked like a pitiable half-surrender. Something was left out, something was changed; or, more likely, the original impulse so beautiful in itself simply played out. The good motive so often becomes blunted, embittered, or exhausted that time and again we need the voice of God to quicken and reaffirm the spirit in its supreme resolves, its rare idealisms.

Now it is here in the brief sermon notes of the prophet Haggai that this age-long drama of the spirit's struggle is set forth in all its simple grandeur. For in the humble story of the rebuilding of the temple one may discover some of the history of his own soul and hear again the rebuke and encouragement of the divine voice.

What is that story which is so necessary to the understanding of the prophet and to the revival of our old ideals? In substance this: In 597 B.C. Nebuchadrezzar besieged Jerusalem, plundered the temple, and took captive some ten thousand of the best people. These exiles were settled as colonists in the fertile lands on the banks of the Chebar in Babylonia. Ezekiel, their priest and prophet, shared their fortunes and roundly condemned their infidelity which had resulted so disastrously. Under the storm of his righteous condemnation the people bowed in penitence. When the utter overthrow

of Jerusalem was accomplished in 586 there joined them in humiliation another great company of fellow-exiles. But out of humiliation comes hope, out of the storm the rainbow. And in due time the prophet spread across their dark sky the radiant promise of a return and the glorious ideal of a temple rebuilt and resounding with the ancient praises of their God.

This vision fastened itself upon the devout Hebrew heart, it alleviated toil, it banished despondency. While they waited and hoped and prayed with wistful faces toward Jerusalem two generations were born, and they that had come down into captivity as young men began to whiten with age. Time and again was the story told and then retold; and the former glory of Zion was painted with that iridescence which fond memory always gives.

When would the deliverer come? When would God release this holy purpose that it might hurl itself into accomplishment? No wonder that when the magnanimous conqueror Cyrus came and in 539 issued his edict of release to such as wished to return and rebuild the temple he was heralded as "the anointed of God." Such an opportunity, you may be sure, was also a process of selection. It called out to this glorious enterprise the most idealistic and unselfish of the colony, those who could not live by bread alone, those whose souls had not been satisfied by the fat of the land.

One-sixth of the people arose and followed the vision, among them some of the aged. These hoped once again to behold the glory of God as they had seen it in the sanctuary, before their eyes should close in death. What a happy band of pilgrims they were! And at nightfall you might have heard, perhaps, their pilgrim songs as they robbed the journey of its weariness and through praise gathered strength out of the unseen. I wonder whether they used a psalm like the eighty-fourth!

> How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!
> My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord;
> My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God.
> Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house,
> And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young;
> Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts,
> My King and my God.
> Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:
> They will be still praising thee.

You see how they envied the little birds that nested in those broken altars.

> Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;
> In whose heart are the highways to Zion.
> Passing through the valley of Weeping they make it a place of springs;
> Yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings.
> They go from strength to strength,
> Every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.
> O Lord God of hosts hear my prayer:
> Give ear, O God of Jacob.

Behold, O God, our shield,
And look upon the face of thine anointed.
For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For the Lord God is a sun and a shield:
The Lord will give grace and glory:
No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.
O Lord of hosts,
Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

With such music in their hearts they came at length upon the gray débris and wretched squalor of that ancient site. With a right good will did they set about clearing the temple area and assembling material for the new building. In due time the foundation was in, or at least outlined, and the day came for laying the cornerstone. It was to them a great occasion and one full of high and sacred sentiment. They would be satisfied with no less a liturgy than the great antiphonal service of Solomon's temple. Bravely did they lift their voices in the sacred chant; solemnly and with heartfelt meaning came the answering response.

Then all at once from the gray-bearded group, whose eyes had seen and whose memories had retained a greater glory, there went up a bitter wail, a dissonance mingling with courageous praise. "How have we seen the temple and how do we see it now?" they moaned aloud. The mean proportions of the building as now outlined and the humble quality of

even their best material were only disappointment over against the towering splendor and dazzling wealth of that former habitation of God. The music, you see, had quickened memory and broken up the fountains of emotion. So did they struggle together, praise and pain, as they always do.

Then in addition to this note of discouragement from within came the opposition of the Samaritans from without. For the very purity and exclusiveness of this ideal had repulsed and offended these would-be helpers. There developed also embarrassing intrigue at the Persian court: an attempt to discredit their loyalty in the eyes of their benefactor Cyrus. No wonder that at the end of two years their noble impulse was spent and all their hopes lay prone upon the ground. Apparently their disillusion was complete.

But this, let us bear in mind, was the defeat of the best souls of that great exile colony. The five-sixths remaining on that fertile Babylonian soil knew no like defeat; they more nearly compassed the average ambitions of their average lives. They never cried out from some dark Machaerus, "Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?" Their hopes never had a hero's grave in Nebo just outside the promised land. They were fat, secure, "successful."

But caught in the reaction of their baffled hope our spiritual heroes retreated to the thronged and easy highway of practicality. "It was a great ideal,"

they said, "but impossible; a dream of surpassing beauty, but still a dream. Now let us come down to reality. Here we are, and here are our wives and children; and we must live. We must have homes while we till this land round about Jerusalem. Subsistence is necessary, idealism is optional." So they reasoned. Consequently, one day, when the thrifty Levi met his intelligent brother Benjamin he said: "Good brother, to what purpose do these fine cedars of Lebanon, which we gathered for that impossible project, lie out in the wind and weather to check and warp? Personally I dislike to see anything wasted, and I feel a bit uneasy every time I see them there. Would it not be wiser to divide them and ceil our homes against the cold? They are of fine grain and fragrant. They will adorn our homes and give us the comfort and satisfaction to which we surely have some right."

This policy was generally approved, and their homes were inlaid with the cedar of Lebanon. Then they settled down for comfort and to the profitable work of farm and vineyard. For a dozen years they tried it. But always there was something short in the crops, and the wine did not quite satisfy; and when a man and his wife went to their money bag the one said to the other, "There must be a hole in it!"

Oh, how familiar is that story; and who of us is not a participant in it? Who but the God and

Father of our spirits knows the inutility of our misappropriations, the wretchedness of our ease, the emptiness of our luxury, the ache that is clothed in velvet and fine draperies, the bruised wings in the golden cage of practical materialism?

It was to this situation that the prophet came. I think it was in the autumn of the year 520 B.C. The great, mysterious, and blessed messenger of God knew their malady. He knew the hunger of the heart for a cause, a something that makes bread-winning an incident, and wealth an instrument, and life an opportunity. Yes, he knew, and he saw those walls that had reached up a little way from the earth and now resembled almost the very ruins from which they sought to rise.

Seer and physician that he was, he reached through the incrustations of a dozen years of vain comfort and laid his finger upon a sensitive spot. "What is this?" he said. They winced, and with blanched faces answered him and one another, "It is the old ideal." You see it was there. It always is—that holy vision of our best moments, the Amen of the soul answering ever to the voice of God. It is disturbing, but eternal; in realization far off, yet near as life itself; costly beyond measure, yet the sole condition that makes us human, lifts us from all-fours, straightens our foreheads, and gives us sonship with the eternal God.

Yes, you know it costs, this struggle. You know by now that the way is longer than it seemed, and

that the radiant peaks seen in the pure morning air did not betray the vast intervening distance nor the ravines that lay so mercifully hidden in the glorious vista. But still you do not choose otherwise, nor belie your divine lineage. For this quest is the measure of life, and the only victory worth having is the victory of the spirit, the bringing of the ideal into mastery over refractory and stubborn conditions.

Here is a young woman who has heard the call of foreign missions. The glowing words of some missionary have claimed her for this noble task. How beautiful it all seems. She sees herself giving to the famished and dying the very bread of life for which they cry. Thousands of faces dark and almost blank in ignorance and superstition light up in joyous acceptance of her story of the Christ.

At last, after some preparation, much devotion, enthusiastic meetings, and impressive partings, she is on her way. But the foreign shore on which she lands is by no means covered with expectant listeners ready to be transformed. Her winged ideal soon comes to its test in barriers of language, in misconceptions both hers and theirs, in the slow East, in the primary demands of health, employment, education, friendship, and the patient demonstration of Christian living. After a long time, a very long time, perhaps there is a convert. Now she begins to know what her ideal really involves and that she must pay the toll and enter the kingdom of

reality through toil and sacrifice or turn back, a defeated victim of her own imagination.

So of the lad who in response to patriotism enlists to serve his country. How much of glamor mingles with his choice? Uniforms and music, pictures and parades; and the call to fight Spain perhaps: these are large factors; and he almost sees himself rushing to the cannon's mouth and snatching victory from the enemy. Very well, he enlists, and then what does he do? You will see him with heavy knapsack on the long march, or digging muddy trenches like a laborer of the street, sleeping on hard cots and faring poorly on ill-cooked rations—what a round of distasteful and inglorious toil! And just there is the test. Will his patriotic impulse harness itself to the necessary toil? Will it infuse that toil with the ideal, which was half ignorance, and will it survive?

So of those early dreams of ours, when we thought how beautiful and easy it would be to run our future business on the Golden-Rule basis. That was before we knew the fierce competition of the commercial world, before we stood in the arena with families depending upon us and old age or sickness lying in wait in the thicket of the near-by years. Or it was the practice of law that we idealized as the disinterested search for justice, or medicine as a generous philanthropy, or the ministry as the free expression of religious conviction, or all labor as a sweet incense offered unto God. Do you not remember? And

have you not turned fiercely upon the sphinx-like reality of life as it really is and called it a humbug, a great grim humbug? For the world is gray and practical and life is very baffling in its complexity. The ideal is bruised and altered in the conflict. Nay, at times have we not abandoned our ideals as foolish and sought the shelter of our ceiled houses? What do we need but the voice of the prophet to tell us once again the thing that we know; to rekindle, it may be, the high ideal of home that has been worn down by toil and care and has seen its romance fading into apathy?

To be sure, the task *is* harder than we at first think, and the validity of an ideal is measured by its resurrection power. Let us then who begin to feel the weight of life with its middle age of compromise, and its deadening level of average accomplishment, let us go back to that best experience in which God surely spoke and let us take up again with grateful hands and with riper judgment the old ideal, and so finish our temple.

But you will notice that the discouragement of these ardent souls came partly from the overtowering form of a better than their best. The shadow of Solomon's temple obscured their poor endeavor; and for the idealist this experience is very hard to bear. By his very nature he must excel. "The best or nothing," is his cry. To be outmatched will tempt him to abandon all. And here again we need the prophet who tells us that the choice was not between

Solomon's temple and theirs, but between theirs and none; to tell us that life is not a straight-away competitive race with one winning and all the rest behind, but a relay race against time, and for every man his lap. Paul finishes his course and Augustine his, Luther and Gordon and Shaftesbury theirs, and each of us ours. There is no flat competition; rather the best that has been calls to the best in us. I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord of hosts.

Here is a young woman who has been mastering the piano. To some native ability she has added faithful effort, and she begins to think that she knows and commands music. Then some day she attends a concert where a Paderewski who *is* music flings it forth without let or hindrance; brings it crashing upon rockbound coasts or sends it floating like mist off into silence sweet; makes it mourn or rejoice, fight, conquer, or sleep. And then your amateur, what does she do? What is her first reaction? Does not her soul cry out instinctively, "I cannot and I will not!"? And does she not feel like renouncing forever her lame makeshift, her second-rate temple?

But then, oh, then, let us hope that the prophet speaks. What of her home and her circle and all the humble hearts whom she can serve? What of the twilight hour when souls need solace? What of all those folk who could never hear the great artist, perhaps not even if they heard the sounds he made?

Shall Solomon's temple ruin her project? Or shall its inlaid gold, limited in time and place and service, be but a challenge to the best she has; a bond of oneness, the call of the general to the rank and file? Have we not felt this, my friends? Have we not faced the tragedy of two talents, and of one? Have we not seen the back of those we thought to be competitors, and felt our pace slacken and our confidence relax?

A young man takes up debating in his high-school years, delivers a few declamations, receives the ever-ready praise of those who always hope great things for youth. He dreams of swaying audiences to his will, and, with the thought of turning his talent to its highest use, determines to be a herald of the gospel of God's love. Already he sees the throngs being molded to the divine will that is vocal in him. And then one day he drops into Trinity Church where Phillips Brooks is in the height of his power. Beauty and strength are there, kindness and honesty and deep knowledge of the soul. His eloquence comes in like a tide. The little boats and the big ships that lay half afloat or careened on the muddy flats of a commonplace shore right themselves and move off for new and better ventures on God's great deep.

But what of the lad, what of the preacher that is to be? See, his head has gone down and rests almost in shame on the pew in front. Hot tears rush to his eyes. Now he knows. His measure is

taken. Oh, the test of that moment when the flicker on the hearth sees the lighthouse and draws back into the unburned coal! Then comes the word of the Lord by the prophet saying, "Do I need only the lighthouse and not the hearth and the friendly lights of home? Do I need only the lighthouse and not the street lamps for the wayfarer in the dark and dangerous city of our modern life?"

Then it becomes plain, the oneness of all God's messengers; and the old ideal gathers itself up for the completion of its temple. God's best strikes hands with our best, and every man's best is equal in the sight of God. So did the Christ go about among us, not as an awful verdict but as an emancipation. He saw the Kingdom, the perfect will of God entempled in the whole creation. He paid the price. At his call mediocrity leaped into excellence and immortality. Every bud of faith unfurled and waved its signal to the sun. To know and follow him is to travel the hard road of the idealist, but in that way is God.

Back to the old altars let us go, my friends, back to the old loves, the old ideals; and with the weight of practical affairs full upon us and with the little wisdom that has been dearly bought let us dedicate ourselves anew to our half-built temple. For the voice of the prophet is the voice of God: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."

PRAYER

Blessed Spirit of God: Bring us again to our sanctuaries. They are incomplete, neglected, and pitiful in the light of our early hopes, but we dare not desert them. How can we thank thee for the glory of those early visions and for thy rebukes of our low ambitions? Oh, gird us, we pray thee, that we may no longer fear that which is difficult nor scorn that which is ordinary. Let our common task glow again with the light of holy purpose, and give us some part in thy work which forever abides.

Align our lives, which are but for a moment, with thine eternal will. Give us grace to cast ease aside and to act in the day of our opportunity. Let no past grandeur chill our ardor and no idle dream of the far future arrest us in the duty of today; and if we need the discipline of failure and sorrow, help us to be refined and not consumed by the flame.

We acknowledge every movement of thy spirit within us to create and to release our best purposes. And when we fall from our enthusiasms may we be still with thee. Bless all in thy presence who know the tides of the Spirit in their ebb and flow, and out of our own weakness may there come a broader charity toward all human failure as out of thy justice there comes a more confident hope in every worthy cause.

So may we have songs for sighing and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. May we clasp hands with duty as with a dear friend, and so have the joy of Jesus in whose name we offer ourselves anew to thee. AMEN.

VII

WHAT JESUS THOUGHT OF HIS OWN DEATH

BY

ERRETT GATES

WHAT JESUS THOUGHT OF HIS OWN DEATH

The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it (Luke 9:22–24).

For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

The death of Jesus has occupied a large place in the thought of the Christian community since his day; a far larger place than in his own thought, and a very different place. Christian theology and poetry have built their conceptions of his death, not on what he thought or said about it, but on what the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New are supposed to have said about it. The historic theology of the atonement is like a pyramid built on its apex. Jesus had little to say of his death, but the libraries are filled with the theories of it.

I am not concerned at this time to deal with all these numberless theories of his death which have played so large a part in religious speculation, either to explain them or refute them; but to inquire what Jesus himself thought of his death, in a few

clear statements concerning it. For there are some statements concerning his death which are not clear; about which there have been many speculations to no moral and practical purpose. This is especially true of the saying: "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." This is supposed to be a reference to his death; but it is veiled in a form of expression which makes its meaning uncertain. If interpreted at all, it should be interpreted in connection with his teaching which can be understood with some certainty, and in the light of his total body of thought. The final commentary upon what he said is, after all, the ruling spirit of his life and conduct.

I shall try to unfold the meaning of his death as it lies in his words under three aspects: its *certainty*, its *necessity*, and its *efficacy*.

Jesus does not speak of his death, until late in his public ministry; but, when he does first speak of it, we are impressed with his matured consciousness of its *certainty*. He says to his disciples: "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." Whence, then, his certainty of his death? Is not every human being just as certain of death some time? What is there singular in it, then? It was not merely the certainty of dying, for he must have been assured of that as an inevitable human experience, from the earliest period of his life. It was the cer-

tainty of a violent, premature death, at the hands of the religious leaders of the nation, which was the new and singular element in Jesus' consciousness. He did not have far to seek for intimations of it. It was no sudden discovery, no new revelation from heaven, but the result of a long experience of growing conflict with the scribes and Pharisees. In the first days of his ministry they had assumed an attitude of irreconcilable opposition toward him and had charged him with having a devil and doing his beneficent works under the power of the prince of devils. In that judgment of him they judged themselves. They disclosed a fatal moral blindness which saw only evil in that which was good, and good in that which was evil. With such a spirit Jesus could come to no terms. The fundamental conflict between his teaching and theirs, the traps set to catch him in his talk, the rumors that came to him of plots to destroy him, all pointed in the direction of a tragic dénouement.

But besides his acquaintance with the scribes and Pharisees of his own time, he knew the history of his people, and the tragic end which had overtaken some of the prophets who went before him. Could he hope to escape their fate? Not if he were true to his calling. He read his own destiny in the light of what happened from Abel to Zachariah. He saw in the religious leaders of his own time the "sons of them that slew the prophets." He felt within himself the calling and spirit of a prophet; and he

saw all the conditions present in his own generation which had in previous times required the blood of the righteous. His death, therefore, was to be the fate which is likely to overtake any good man in an evil age. He was persecuted for righteousness' sake. It came under a universal law of progress. The prophets of a new day, the bearers of the torch of progress, the reformers of an old order or the creators of a new order have always paid the price of their calling in some kind of suffering. There is no escape from the suffering, except in escape from the calling; but with Jesus that was impossible. Having chosen his calling, having seen the new vision of a coming Kingdom, having put his hand to the plow, there was no looking back.

There is also a note of *necessity* running through Jesus' utterances concerning his death. He not only foresaw that he *would* die, but that he *must* die. "The Son of man must suffer many things." As if a power above him had determined this event, and gave him no choice in the matter; as if there were a fixed order of things, a divine plan, in which he must play his part, without having any voice in the formation of the plan or any freedom in the execution of it. Are we justified in taking this view of the necessity of his death—a part which he acted, but which he would have escaped if he could?

Jesus has been portrayed only too frequently in our speculations as the victim of a rigid sacrificial system, as a helpless lamb led to the slaughter,

whose death meant something to a god or a priest, but nothing to himself. If anything is clear in his words, it is that he understood his death and participated wholly and freely in it. The tradition recorded in John is true to all that we know of Jesus, when he is represented as saying concerning his life: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father." It was a free-will offering on his own part, and not a gift wrested from him.

But why must he suffer? Could he not have escaped the awful ordeal? Could he not have retreated from the conflict, retired to the quietness of his home at Nazareth, pursued his carpentry, let the religious customs, and ideas, and hopes of his people alone, and died quietly in his bed of old age? Yes and no. Yes, he could, if there had been nothing better in life for him than living long and softly, and dying naturally. There was not a time up to the very last when he could not have made peace with the scribes and Pharisees, and priests, if he had been willing to pay the price. Yes, he could have saved his young life for the infirmity and decay of old age, but he would have lost his soul, as many a man has done under similar trials.

But, on the other hand, he could not retreat from the conflict, not merely because a power above him would not let him, but because a power within

him would not let him. Deny at last to save himself from suffering all that he had taught his disciples about the blessedness of purity of heart, the inwardness of true righteousness, and the infinite value of the soul? Turn away from his friends and disciples after they had followed him and ministered to him through pain and loss, believing all that he taught them of the recompense awaiting them in the Kingdom of God? That was impossible. The love and approval of God, the confidence of his disciples and friends, the peace of his own soul, all the good of existence would have gone as the price paid for peace with hypocrites, whited sepulchers, and blind leaders of the blind. Such an alliance at the price of such a betrayal of truth and degradation of soul was intolerable.

But when he first made the announcement of his death to his disciples, he showed that he had grasped the meaning of it in its deeper and wider bearings. It was no solitary trial he was enduring, no unique or isolated experience that confronted him. Other righteous men had died for their righteousness before him, and many of his disciples would die for their faith after him. The giving of life is inescapable to one who would find life. He seized it in its universal aspect as a principle of all moral conduct. He said to his disciples, after Peter had declared that violent suffering and death could not come to him: "You tell me that this fate does not belong to me and shall never happen to me. You do not seem to

understand the nature of the life I am living, and that you are called to live in following me. The very principle of it is self-sacrifice. If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. Do not suppose then that death in this cause is disaster; it is the condition of success. It belongs to the nature of true life; he that loses his life finds it, he that saves it loses it. Since this is so, my suffering and death fall in with the very nature of my messianic calling."

Jesus died his death as he had lived his life, in the realm of inward moral necessity, and in it he found freedom. He had to die as he did because he lived as he had. If he could have changed the kind of life, he might have averted the kind of death. But to have changed his life would have been contrary to all his ideals and desires, and would have given him more suffering than the cross. There is a necessity which is a genuine freedom. For what is our freedom? The liberty to choose between good and evil, with the possibility always of choosing the evil, or the inclination always to choose the good? Is a man unfree because he always keeps one direction and cannot be turned away from it? Moral freedom is a personal matter; we cannot judge another's freedom. It is a man's harmony with himself; the harmony of his deed with his will, of his life with his creed. One man's freedom might be

another's bondage. The good man is free in the pursuit of his goodness; the bad man, in the pursuit of his wickedness. Jesus was able to do what he willed; to send himself in the direction of his dominant inclination, even though it were a way beset with pain and death. That was for him to be free. His death, therefore, was a voluntary act of his own, and not the arbitrary infliction of another.

That does not mean that it was endured alone out of all relation to God. The imperative within him which forbade compromise with unrighteousness or retreat from his messianic calling he identified with God. He was conscious of a complete fusion of his own with his Father's will. But we have no means of knowing the ground of the divine will for him except as it finds expression in his own will. His own and his Father's will united within him and constituted a moral will grounded in the dictates of moral feeling and reason. What he did he did both because it was right and because it was God's will, and between them there was no conflict. It was this consciousness of the Father's will in his death which came to his rescue at last in Gethsemane, when he hesitated for the moment to go forward and drink the cup of his sufferings that awaited him. But every impulse within him and every intimation from heaven finally united in urging him on to his destiny.

It would seem, then, that the death of Jesus was an event whose certainty is wholly comprehensible

and whose necessity is fully justifiable within the sphere of his own moral life, and the conditions of his time.

But the Christian community has been far more interested and has insisted far more strenuously upon the *efficacy* of his death. "For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." One looks in vain in these words or in any other words of Jesus for the notion that his death was needed to effect a change in God's disposition toward man; that he appeased the divine wrath or satisfied the divine justice. Such notions are pure importations into the teaching of Jesus, either from Jewish or pagan religious sources.

But some of the prophets and psalmists of the Old Testament rose above the priestly conception of Jehovah and declared that he never required the death of anything to satisfy him.

> For thou delightest not in sacrifice;
> Else would I give it:
> Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering.
> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
> A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

And Isaiah testified that God was far more pleased with brotherly love and justice, with clean hands and pure hearts, than with the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.

Nor can we attribute to Jesus that other equally heathenish superstition that there is a kind of virtue in suffering as such. Jesus never spoke a word in praise of mere suffering; but many words in comfort of those who were under suffering for their righteousness. It is not suffering that has value, but what is achieved under suffering or through suffering. The same thing would have had the same value if it could have been achieved without suffering.

If the mere dying of Jesus were his highest achievement, then it would have been enough if he had merely died; whether in this world or another, on this planet or another, would have made no difference, unless the value of that death is what it achieved emotionally within those who witnessed it. But even then its realistic description would have carried the same kind of efficacy. It is quite possible that the dying of Jesus—the brutal circumstances of it and the spectacle of suffering innocence—started a reaction in favor of his person and cause. Other causes have prospered on the unjust suffering of their votaries. Persecution has frequently overreached its mark and started a revulsion of feeling in favor of the persecuted. Can it be that Christianity owes its existence to the timely and fortunate mistreatment of its founder and the affecting nature of his last sufferings?

The mere statement of this absurdity makes us feel how remote it was from Jesus' spirit or purpose

to stage the physical sufferings of himself or of his disciples. If there was any value in his death, it was because of the life that preceded it. He said he came to give his life a ransom for many. The life of Jesus was not deposited in the blood in his veins, like the life of a lamb or goat. An animal has no other life to give. The life he gave as a ransom for many was the life he gave in his ministering to others; it was the life he lived in the spirit that had value, and not the life he lived in the body, except as that life was the temporary vehicle of the spiritual life, and sustained it before the eyes of men. But all through the years since he died, in spite of the theologians and poets and priests and artists and sculptors who have all but made of Christianity a cult of the Lord's physical sufferings, the influence that has flowed from Jesus has come from what he said and did and not from what happened to him on Calvary.

"The Son of man came to minister." Ministering is a life-process not a death-act.

"The good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." It is not the shepherd's business merely to die, but to feed and protect and shelter his sheep. A dead shepherd or a dying shepherd would be no shepherd at all. It is the effort of a good shepherd to avoid death, and not to court it; to live just as long as he can in order to save as many of the sheep as possible. If he must die, as every good shepherd is ready to do if it becomes necessary

in the discharge of his calling, he will die trying to save the lives of his sheep, and not as if he were carrying out a foreordained scheme of his employer. Dying is no advantage either to the sheep or to the shepherd. He can do nothing for them except by living with them. His living with them gives him an opportunity to prove his love and devotion to them; while his dying for them proves the measure of his love and devotion. The death of the shepherd would be only failure and loss where he had no chance to live with them and provide for their security in his absence.

The dying of Jesus would have meant no more to the world than the dying of the thieves on either side of him if his life had meant no more than theirs. His dying was not something apart from his living, but a part of it. The principle of the one was the principle of the other. His whole life was a self-giving, a progressive dying; while his dying was but the final act of his self-giving. He must have approached the cross—the limit of human endurance—many times before he finally hung upon it. He carried about daily in his spirit the form of the cross; and that was his atonement. The ebbing out of his life began anew every morning and was stayed only by the coming of night, which sent the multitudes of the sick away to their homes. His life was a daily process of dying and a daily process of rising to new life again. The soldiers merely took what was left at the close of one of these days.

All along the way he traveled doing good, he left the fragments of his life, in wistful minds awakened by his words, or in grateful hearts restored to health and strength.

He gave his life a ransom: it was to accomplish a deliverance for many. What this deliverance was he does not tell us. But keeping in mind the conclusion that the life contained all the efficacy of the death, it must be that the life revealed the nature of the deliverance. That life began to be effective in his lifetime and not after his death; and what men experienced under his teaching, preaching, healing, and forgiving was the ransom he came to bring.

Men were variously affected by him: some only in their bodily conditions; others in their social, mental, or moral conditions. The ransoming power of Jesus was just as extensive, and of the same nature, as the evils he removed. He took away their sicknesses and diseases; their sins and fears; their hatred and pride and envy and hypocrisy. He summed up all of his redemptive activity for men in the phrase, "the Kingdom of heaven." Whatever this may have meant, his ransom meant. By so much as he persuaded men to enter this Kingdom he redeemed them, then and there. It certainly meant deliverance from sin; for the Kingdom of heaven was a kingdom of righteousness. Whether it included also deliverance from the "wrath of God," the "penalties of the law," "captivity to Satan," or the "torments of hell" depended upon the reality

of those theological evils, for one who has been delivered from sin has been delivered from these things, and from the fear of them.

His deliverance was intended to accomplish for men their highest good, both here and hereafter. But he conceived their highest good in terms of a coming kingdom, a heavenly community, in which they should be ruled in all of their relations by the impulse of brotherly love. The deliverance he brought, therefore, was a real deliverance, present and earthly. He taught his disciples to pray that the Kingdom might come, and that the will of God might be done on earth as in heaven. He did not propose to do something for men merely in heaven, or in the future, or in their absence, or in another state of being; though the good he brought was to abide with them wherever and as long as they existed, but not without their consent or participation. It was a good which belonged to them, and was of their choosing and making.

We come then to the final and perhaps the most vital phase of Jesus' thought concerning his own death—how it becomes efficacious for men. He did not intend to impose its efficacy upon them without their co-operation. By the very nature of the deliverance he proposed, as a moral transaction, it could not take place without the voluntary and active participation of men themselves. Sin that is taken away from a man without his consent will return to him. Virtue that is imputed to him with-

out his choice of it is not his own. It was as far from Jesus to impute to men the values of his death as the virtues of his life.

The death of Jesus was, for the disciples, as much a part of the following of Jesus as his life. As they were indissolubly joined in the career of Jesus, so were they to be in the career of a disciple. He said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Anyone who would live his life must adopt the principle and possibility of his death. His death, therefore, was not a solitary transaction in the history of redemption which took place once and for all as a great substitute for men; but it was a pattern for everyone who would follow him. The redemption of the world is a co-operative process in which everyone who shares in it is co-laborer and fellow-redeemer with Jesus. Everyone must bear his own cross, must make his own sacrifice for sin, must lay down his life as an atonement both for himself and for the cause which requires it. And whether he give his life gradually for a cause in a long career of self-forgetful service, or suddenly as a dramatic testimony to his devotion, it amounts to the same thing. It is the *will* to die which is the essence of self-sacrifice.

It is not often that the giving of one man's life is enough for the triumph of a righteous cause.

Many offerings for sin must usually be made. A multitude which no man can number has already been offered in the single cause of religious liberty. How many more will be required no one can say. Everyone, in fact, who dedicates himself to that cause with a will to die is a prospective martyr to it. He may never be advanced to the ranks of actual martyrs, but his devotion has furthered the cause to the extent of his ability. And that is what really counts in any cause—the service of living confessors. Jesus nowhere intimated that he would be the only sufferer in his cause. On the other hand, he forewarned his disciples that like sufferings with his own were destined to befall them. In this respect the disciple shall not be above his teacher, nor the servant above his lord. "If they have persecuted me they will persecute you also," he said.

But cannot the disciple of Christ hope for a time when there will be no more need of sacrifice for sin, when the last martyr shall lay down his life? There may come a time in the transformation of human nature and society when brother shall no longer deliver up brother to death for Christ's sake or for righteousness' sake; but so long as there is human want and misery, greed, envy, and selfishness, there will be opportunities to minister and to give one's life a ransom for many.

PRAYER

Our Father: Help us to enter more fully into the spirit of Jesus' life, that we may truly know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformable unto his death; for we believe that if we suffer with him, we shall also live with him. Take away from us all fear of losing the joy and good of life if we should give our lives. Bless all those who are laying down their lives for others in the manifold ways of human service: and comfort them with the assurance that they do not suffer alone nor in vain, but have fellowship with the spirits of all good men, and with him who was made perfect through suffering. We rejoice to believe in this universal fellowship of suffering and of self-giving which constitutes the real church of God, the communion of saints, both past and present, in heaven and on earth. Make us worthy of fellowship in this church and to this church may we be joined by faith and by love, and by patience in well-doing.

Make us ready always to do good unto all men; to love as we have been loved, and to forgive as we also have been forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who loved us and gave himself for us. AMEN.

VIII

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE RELIGION OF PAUL

BY

SHIRLEY JACKSON CASE

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE RELIGION OF PAUL

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Rom. 8:14).

Paul has always been given a large place in the thinking of Christendom. His claim to unique attention is certainly well founded, resting as it does upon a variety of considerations.

In the first place he has contributed very largely to the making of our New Testament. Think for a moment of the relatively large quantity of literature that has been preserved for us under his name. First, we read the Epistle to the Romans, with its sixteen chapters packed full of strong thinking and pertinent admonition; then comes the Corinthian correspondence, twenty-nine chapters in all, in which various themes are discussed with remarkable vigor; then follow the shorter but no less interesting letters to the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians, making an addition of twenty-eight chapters. All these are written to churches. To individuals are the two letters to Timothy, together ten chapters in length, and the short notes to Titus and Philemon. In all about one-fourth the entire New Testament literature is thus credited to Paul; and if we think also of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, commonly supposed to have been written by Luke, the

gentile companion of Paul, we obtain a total of one-half the New Testament to be connected directly or indirectly with the life and work of the first great missionary to the Gentiles.

Moreover, an additional importance attaches to his writings because of their antiquity. When John Mark was yet a young man learning his first lessons in missionary work, Paul had already been laboring for about fifteen years in the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and his work had been fully accomplished—all his letters written and his gospel preached "from Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum," yes, even unto Rome—before the Gospel of Mark was composed. For the most part the Pauline letters fall between the years fifty and sixty, thus antedating the earliest Gospel, that of Mark, by at least a decade, and standing probably half a century before the writing of the Fourth Gospel. When we wish to come into touch with the earliest phases of Christianity that have been preserved for us in literature, we are dependent for our information upon the remains of that correspondence which Paul carried on with the churches he planted at many important points in the Roman Empire.

Paul's importance theologically has always been great. His doctrine of Jesus' pre-existent divinity early became the keynote of speculation about the person of Christ, and his terminology in describing the significance of Jesus' death has been largely

influential, both in earlier and in more recent times, in determining the theological exposition of the idea of atonement. Many other tenets have been supported from time to time by reference to Pauline texts. For example, the idea of "total depravity" seemed to find strong authentication in the statement to the Romans that through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners; while the doctrine of "election" was thought to rest in an impregnable fortress behind another passage in the letter to Rome: "Whom he foreknew he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, ... and whom he foreordained, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Paul's idea of salvation by faith, in contrast with salvation by works, as well as many other characteristics of Pauline thought, has been widely influential, especially in Protestant circles. Of all the New Testament writers Paul is pre-eminently the theologian's mainstay as a source of proof-texts.

Indeed his influence upon the life and thinking of Christianity has been so great that some have questioned whether he rather than Jesus should not be regarded as the real founder of our religion. Certainly many of the dogmas which have been built up in Christianity on a Pauline basis, and made so prominent that they have sometimes seemed to be the very pillars supporting the whole structure of our faith, have little or no connection

with the teaching of Jesus as reported in our oldest Gospels. But we should remember that Paul's doctrines are not the foundation of his religion but its interpretative expansion; he preached Christ according to the doctrines which the ideas of the time allowed him to construct, but behind his preaching, and fundamental to it, was his spiritual life in Christ. The apostle put first things first; it is unfair to him to reverse the order of progression.

When today we turn to him for help by making the letter of his teaching a norm for modern life and thinking, we are hardly true to his wish. He did not allow those Christians who received instruction from him to take the new life quite so easily; it was not to be lived by a rule prescribed from without, but by the guidance of the Spirit realized in the personal religious experience of each convert. To be sure, Paul admonished, he counseled, he instructed, he often demanded obedience, and he sometimes threatened the rod, not, however, that he might lord it over any man's faith but that he might be a helper of every man's joy. Though he did not hesitate to claim an authority for himself equal to that of the chiefest apostles, though he believed Christ had once spoken personally out of the heavens calling him to evangelize the Gentiles, though he rejoiced in visions and revelations of the Lord as his frequent privilege, yet he presented himself as the minister of the brethren and not as their overlord. Not as many as are led by Paul

but as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Today we are wont to estimate the apostle's work immediately in terms of our own thinking, and so our interpretation of him is in danger of lacking realism and vitality. Let us try, in imagination, to place ourselves among his contemporaries, and from that point of view endeavor to understand the secret of his life. In this way we may be able to appreciate more accurately the really vital quality of his personal religion and of the religion he sought to have all Christians realize for themselves. We would see Paul in action, breaking new ground on the frontier, then sowing the seed and leaving it to the care of young and inexperienced assistants while he pushes forward to the cultivation of new fields.

At the outset it must be admitted that Paul did not present a prepossessing picture to the casual observer. He first appeared upon the scene as a religious partisan bitterly persecuting those whose views did not harmonize with his own. Then he embraced the cause he had once so vigorously persecuted, but the spectator would call it an insignificant cause. Paul was still only a despised Jew in the eyes of the Gentiles, with the additional disadvantage of being hated as a traitor by his Jewish kinsmen. Even the members of the mother church at Jerusalem at first looked upon him with suspicion and later regarded him with special disfavor

for granting the Gentiles freedom from certain Mosaic ordinances. Moreover, he did not have even those engaging qualities of personal appearance that would help him to win favor. To gentile ears accustomed to the rhetorician's smooth phrases he was "contemptible" of speech, to eyes that took delight in the athlete's perfection of physical form he very naturally seemed mean of stature, and he was not only weak in bodily presence but at times his physical disabilities became so repugnant that he would not have been surprised had those who saw him under such circumstances despised him and his work. His unique equipment was not of the external sort.

It would not be strange if a contemporary observer had also pronounced Paul's work a failure. His preaching was frequently attended by severe opposition making necessary a hasty and secret flight, while at other times he was caught by the mob and barely escaped with his life. The guardians of civil order not unnaturally looked upon him as a rioter and disturber of the peace. Much of his life was, accordingly, spent in prison. At the moment when he thought to bring his work in the East to completion by a visit to Jerusalem before turning his steps westward to occupy new territory, his active career was cut short by an incarceration of two years at Caesarea followed by a similar period at Rome. If he was liberated at all, it was only a temporary release, to be followed shortly

by a second capture which resulted in his death. His life went out, as indeed much of it had been lived, under the shadow of seeming defeat.

We might urge that the churches he established marked his success. But how did these churches appear in Paul's day? The membership seems to have been drawn, for the most part, from the lower classes; when the apostle was absent some of these congregations were so fickle that they fell an easy prey to his opponents; at other times certain individuals indulged in immoral acts which greatly grieved him, and when he reproved them they threatened to repudiate him and his work. Never was he free from anxiety for the churches. We mistake the situation if we read back into the apostle's day our thought of Christianity as a powerful organization perpetuating itself by its own momentum almost regardless of the transitory activity of this or that individual. Paul saw the beginnings of the organization; it was the result of his labor, not the constant source of support for individual effort that it is today.

In no respect did Paul fall heir to a fortunate combination of circumstances which buoyed him up and carried him forward almost involuntarily in his life of strenuous activity. Throughout his career he was in a state of constant struggle, striving to transcend the limitations which circumstances placed upon him, yet he maintained the struggle with unswerving purpose to the end of his life.

What kept him steadfast? What kept the deep undercurrent of his life moving on steadily despite the stormy experiences that beat upon its surface? There seems to be only one possible answer. All the while he counted himself to be under the guidance of an authoritative voice, the leading of the Spirit of God. It was not strange that an onlooker, unacquainted with the apostle's conception of true religion, should fail to take this fact into consideration. The Jews were placing stress upon legal observances, the Gentiles were demanding an erudite philosophy, or were content with external forms after the manner of the heathen faiths, but to find the acme of religion in a life of spiritual relationship to God was not easy even for the primitive church in Palestine where Jesus had made this ideal the very kernel of his teaching.

Nor is it altogether surprising in our time to find persons who believe themselves true followers of Paul, yet who fail to comprehend with full clearness this central item in his religion. He spoke so many words of value, he performed so many admirable deeds, he thought so vigorously upon the problems of that age that these secondary items are wont to receive our chief attention. We concern ourselves with hearing his words, with imitating his deeds, or with grasping his thought, and in so doing perhaps we forget that the attainment of the Pauline type of life is the matter of greater consequence. His thinking may not be adequate to meet the

demands of our age, mere imitation of his conduct can never produce very satisfactory results under a new set of circumstances, and very probably Paul would have evolved a somewhat different dogmatic system had the thought-terms of today been current in his time. But these are peripheral phases of his life; its center is his loyalty to the dictates of the Spirit. This is first and always the quality of life which he regards as genuinely Christian. Everyone who would be a true son of God must realize in personal experience the leading of the divine Spirit.

The immediateness of the Spirit's authority is a prominent feature in Paul's religion. We might have expected to find this trained rabbi resorting to the Old Testament revelation for the authentication of his faith; and indeed this is what we do find, but we soon discover that his convictions were determined primarily by a vital spiritual experience in the light of which all past revelations were newly interpreted. We cannot today regard all these reinterpretations as strictly justifiable. The argument from seed and seeds in Galatians is hardly according to the canons of modern logic, and we think Paul has gone quite contrary to the intention of the Old Testament passage when he tells the Corinthians that the Deuteronomic injunction "thou shalt not muzzle the ox" was given, not for the sake of the ox, but to supply Paul with a proof-text for his contention that a missionary was entitled to

support from the churches he served. Yet we do not doubt the sincerity, nor even the validity, of the apostle's convictions on the practical problems of his day, notwithstanding his failure always to produce adequate scriptural proof for his position.

The voice which spoke in Paul's own soul was his chief authentication. There were many things in his experience about which the Old Testament said nothing, but that fact did not discount their significance. His first task was to learn God's will through the immediate guidance of the Spirit. To defend the convictions thus obtained, by showing that they were in accord with past interpretations of the divine will, was a problem of dialectics not always successfully solved. His Judaizing opponents had the better of the argument, so far as producing explicit Old Testament support for their position was concerned, but Paul's failure in this respect does not detract from his significance. It rather implies that he had attained a new understanding of God's purposes, an understanding which transcended that of the earlier days. Consequently, the ultimate vindication of the type of faith he preached was not to be found in an array of proof-texts; it lay rather in the vital effectiveness of the new faith. As he says to the Galatians: "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" "He that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the

law or by the hearing of faith?" Paul's religious convictions are not, in the first instance, derived from objective scriptural postulates; they are inwardly attained. Paul probably would have been less effective had he been more literally scriptural.

It is also a striking fact that he was not content to be guided simply by the opinions of those who were Christians before he embraced the new faith; nevertheless he did seek help and guidance from this source. He says himself that on one occasion he visited Jerusalem for two weeks especially to see Peter; but on a question of conviction affecting the practical efficiency of the new religion in the gentile community at Antioch he resisted Peter to the face. Even the teaching of the earthly Jesus was not a restrictive norm for Paul's ideas. On occasion he does show that this teaching appealed to him strongly and was given an important place even in gentile communities, as when he reminded the Corinthians that the Lord gave charge that the wife should not depart from her husband, but where Paul had no commandment of the Lord he did not hesitate to give his own opinion to meet the necessities of a new situation. His first question was not, What does Christian tradition permit me to believe and do? nor even, What did Jesus enjoin? but, What is the will of the Spirit concerning the practical problems of my life? This once determined, the opinions of other Christians, the teaching of Jesus, as well as the Old Testament records, were all drawn upon

to contribute interpretatively toward the understanding and enforcement of the Spirit's will.

But are we not to find in Paul's unique conversion an objective revelation which was normative for all his subsequent thinking and conduct? He attaches great worth to this experience. Yet he does not claim to have received at this time any full stock of ideas and instructions to meet all his later necessities. His conversion marked the mere beginning of his life of spiritual attainment—the moment of his first realization that to be spiritually minded was true life. We should not fail to appreciate the value of this experience for his religious life, yet we are not to imagine that it supplied him with a detailed program for future activity and furnished him an itemized set of dogmas for application to all new questions. Indeed, he did not picture the Christian life either for himself or for others as something handed down from heaven ready made. It was to be realized through daily care in ascertaining and following the dictates of the Spirit. Into this struggle to learn and do the divine will Paul threw himself most energetically in order that he might at last find approval before God.

In obtaining the Spirit's guidance Paul, like others, had to feel his way. When it was a question of choosing a mission field he once assayed to go into Bithynia, but ultimately found the Spirit leading him by way of Troas into Macedonia; again,

when he was questioning regarding an appropriate type of preaching for cultured Greeks he tried one style of discourse at Athens, but the result led him to choose "Jesus Christ and him crucified" as his sole theme henceforth, whether addressing uncultured Asiatics or proud Athenians; again, in dealing with the recalcitrant Corinthian church, it seemed wisest one day to plan a personal visit to Corinth, but on second thought it seemed best to write a letter instead; and, finally, on the occasion of his last visit to Jerusalem he thought to ward off opposition by taking upon himself a Jewish vow, but the expedient proved to be all in vain.

These things are all the more remarkable in the life of one who speaks about his frequent visions, or about acting by revelation. Yet in spite of Paul's tendency toward mysticism he kept his feet firmly planted upon the real world in which he was living. Here it was that he learned his duty; the cry of a needy world was the voice of God calling him on to service. When he wrote to the Galatians that he was directed by revelation to go up to Jerusalem to obtain an understanding with the primitive church regarding the evangelization of the Gentiles, we may be sure the incentive for his action lay in just that practical interest for which he contended at the council: the protection of his gentile converts from disturbing propagandists. That Paul sought divine guidance in this as in all his problems was to be expected. The significant thing is that he did not

wait for his problem to be handed down from the clouds in a moment of ecstasy—he found it in the commonplace world, he faced its demands in the light of his soberest judgments, and he drew upon all the possibilities of his spiritual vision for inspiration in his efforts to solve it correctly. The practical needs of the time were most distinctly a voice of the Spirit.

Paul saved himself from freakishness and impracticability by recognizing the fundamental activity of the Spirit in the normal phases of life. Consequently his moral sense, the demand of conscience, was also a voice of God. Even the Gentiles, though they had not had the advantages of moral training under the Jewish law, heard this divine voice whispering in their ear, but for Christians its utterance was much clearer and more emphatic. Instead of spiritual guidance relieving the believer from moral obligations, as some perverters of Pauline teaching later advocated, the apostle himself insisted rigidly upon the fullest moral obligations as an essential feature of the richest spiritual life. No one who followed the lusts of the flesh could rightfully claim to have the Spirit's guidance; the enmity between the flesh and the Spirit was irreconcilable. Thus the dictates of conscience were in reality a revelation of the divine will.

Similarly Paul regarded his normal convictions in general as expressions of the Spirit's will, and by a life of loyalty to these convictions he found the

secret of future guidance. This attitude called for heroic action at many points in his career. It must have cost him pain to oppose Peter in Antioch, especially when he found Barnabas, his former associate in missionary work, standing with Peter. But as he remained true to his convictions, defending his faith and preaching his gospel under even the most adverse circumstances, his vision of the divine will was kept undimmed and he heard the Spirit constantly calling him on to new activities. Loyalty to the convictions of today resulted in new convictions for tomorrow.

Of course one might give himself up to the power of his convictions and at the same time be led into extreme vagaries. Paul saved himself from this fate by combining the sane balance of commonsense along with his thought of the Spirit-filled life. He exhorted the Thessalonians not to quench the Spirit, but when idlers seemed to be taking advantage of the new spiritual brotherhood Paul wrote: "If any will not work neither let him eat"; and as for Paul's own conduct, he reminded them that he had labored night and day in order not to be a financial burden to the church. When the Corinthians were disposed to quibble about the impossibility of separating themselves from all evil persons, and so were seeking indirectly to justify their lax morality, Paul turned upon them sharply with the command: "Put away the wicked man from among yourselves." Evasive sophistry quickly disappeared

before the straightforward demands of common-sense backed by a strong moral imperative.

In the law of brotherly love Paul seems to find one of the clearest indications of the Spirit's will. This meant for him the complete subordination of all self-interest in behalf of the interests of others—it was a voice whose commands were always to be heeded. While the spiritual life in Christ was one of complete liberty, while idols were nothing and the eating of meats was an insignificant matter, yet if the exercise of Christian liberty caused a weak brother to stumble Paul would "eat no flesh forevermore." Spiritual gifts were to be prized highly and to be sought after earnestly, yet the thing of greatest importance was that they should be exercised in a spirit of love, thus avoiding all pride and jealousy. Speaking in a tongue was a commendable exercise for personal edification, and Paul was especially endowed with this gift, but he preferred to speak five words with his understanding for the edification of his hearers than to speak ten thousand words in a tongue.

Paul's was distinctly a life filled and guided by the Spirit of God, the life of a true son of God. The same possibility of spiritual guidance has been the privilege of Christians in every age and is their privilege still. But as in Paul's time so today, such a life is not an outright gift to a favored few, it is an attainment available for the few or for the many

who are willing to pay the price of attainment, who are willing to seek after and follow the leading of the Spirit.

But where and how shall we direct our search? In Paul's case neither the Mosaic revelation nor the opinions of the primitive Christians constituted the source of his chief inspiration; he was not content with anything less than the immediate guidance of God—a guidance which he discovered in his own personal experience as he confronted the peculiar problems of his day. We should not imagine that the Spirit speaks to us today only from some distant age. Records of men's religious attainments in the past are not without their value; indeed their worth is often very great, as everyone knows who has reflected upon the admirable qualities exemplified in the lives of the founders of our religion. But we must do more than simply hark back to that past if we would discover the will of God for our own day. When we have gleaned from the yesterdays all that they have to give, then we must turn to the present and the future there to find the ultimate authority for our religion, as the Spirit speaks through the demands of modern life and in individual religious experience. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

PRAYER

Almighty Father, Creator and Lord of our spirits: Grant us, we beseech thee, a daily realization of thy

nearness. We thank thee for the revelation of thyself which comes to us through the Spirit-filled lives of thy servants of old. We thank thee that thou hast permitted us to live in a new age and intrusted us with the task of ministering to its needs. As we thy spiritual children consecrate our lives to this service we pray for guidance, to the end that we may walk in the footsteps of the prophets and apostles, being ever led by thy Spirit. This we pray in the name of thine own spiritual son, Jesus of Nazareth. AMEN.

IX

PRAYER

BY

EDWARD SCRIBNER AMES

PRAYER

I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also (I Cor. 14:15).

Prayer is communication. It is a social act. It expresses in all its forms the essentially social nature of the human mind and of religious activities. Man's whole life has grown to be what it is in and through a social order. It is impossible to conceive of man as a totally solitary being. A human infant, left to himself, could not develop into a normal personality. To be sane and genuinely human implies social relations. The very soul comes to be what it is through association with others. The sense of dependence, of companionship, of gratitude and forgiveness arises between persons. This personal and social life is extended by the imagination far beyond the immediate family or tribe. It includes material things, animals, and invisible powers which are treated in many ways like the conscious members of the human group. These are personified, given names, and endowed with human qualities. They are talked to, petitioned, and commanded like living people. This social life easily embraces people and beings who are distant or deceased, remote ancestors and imaginary persons without number. These are addressed with speech and with gifts in the same way as friends

greet each other, and as subjects approach their king. Speech is the natural means of communication, and it is the commonest vehicle of ideas, whether or not these ideas are addressed to persons immediately present. The child talks to his toys. The man talks to his horse and dog, and, though not always in audible words, he communes with nature and with her myriad forms. Everyone talks to himself at times, now to one self, now to another. One self he reproves, another he praises and implores. Soliloquy is one of the most characteristic and revealing activities of the mind. Every individual is a vast and intricate complex of selves, which reflects his varied environment and experience. Every man constantly puts over against himself these various selves and keeps company with them in his thought. The precise way in which this is done, the degree of refinement, of disillusionment, of self-consciousness, varies with the level of experience and culture and with individual temperament. When the mental life is crude and feeble, its personifications are meager and capricious. Intercourse with them is whimsical and superstitious. But when the mind is able to conceive steadily a Being full of ideal virtues, having infinite qualities and existence, then prayer rises to reverence and noble aspiration.

In primitive society, prayer is a magical process. The words employed in religious ceremonies have mysterious power. A Japanese sword-maker, in

making a sword, repeats certain prayers. If the process is not successful he attributes it to some defect in the words he has uttered and repeats them with greater caution for another trial. The words are supposed to have efficacy with the metal or at least with the spirits who control it. In sympathetic magic the possession of a man's name affords power over him even at a distance. The use of it in incantations may cause disease or death. It is therefore difficult to learn the names of savages. Often they do not themselves know their own names, which are kept secret by the old men of the tribe as a means of protection. In such societies it is believed that the use of his name exerts magical power over the god or demon, so that he must come when his name is correctly pronounced in an invocation. The improper use of the name of the deity is considered dangerous. The Hebrews would not pronounce the name Jehovah in ordinary speech. Even in the New Testament the name of Christ is used sometimes with what seems to be a reference to magical power. Several of the early church Fathers held this magical view of the name of Christ, and prayers are still said "in his name" and "for his name's sake," as if the phrase itself were essential.

Prayers for purely individual and personal interests are scarcely above the plane of magic. They are often intended to procure gifts or advantages regardless of the conditions and processes by which

alone such things should be obtained. The child may desire a pony and saddle and ask God for them with the utmost trust and simplicity. He may persist in the request many days and look wistfully out of the window every morning to see whether he has been answered. Prayers ignoring all secondary causes are frequently offered by mature men for very worthy objects. Such were the prayers of George Müller of Bristol, England, who carried on vast enterprises. He only let people know in a general way what he undertook. His special and most urgent appeals were to God. His life accomplished great results in the distribution of two million Bibles, the equipment of hundreds of missionaries, the building and maintenance of five large orphanages, and the establishment of schools in which over a hundred and twenty-one thousand youthful and adult pupils were taught. In such cases the natural laws are unconsciously overlooked in magnifying the working of supernatural influences. There is involved here a primitive and unscientific conception of the world and of God, in which the occasional and unknown phenomena are made superior to the regular, law-abiding experiences of common life.

But there is a type of prayer in which a nobler faith utters itself, faith in the divine reason and law of the world, which calls forth expressions of the profoundest gratitude, of dependence and need, of aspiration and hope. Prayer of this kind is compatible with knowledge and experience. It is con-

sistent with the teaching of psychology that all ideas tend to issue in actions. In this view, prayer is not a mere exercise of sentiment but is a creative and directing activity. It accomplishes results. The thought of food when one is hungry drives one in the search for it. The sudden cry of alarm sets the muscles for quick response. In the same way intent thought of any kind of conduct moves the whole being toward its accomplishment. There is, therefore, no defiance of law, no false mysticism in the statement that the sincere prayers of the heart give direction and energy to the whole life. Hunger and thirst after righteousness lead to its attainment. The contemplation of the divine nature tends to the reproduction of that nature. Distraction and anxiety give place to repose and confidence at the thought of infinite peace and strength. Enmity and strife vanish before the vision of God's love and forgiveness. Indifference and selfish ease are driven out by the thought of the patient, eternal, creative life in the depths of nature and in the forward-moving life of the spirit. One becomes, in some degree, like that which he admires. The presence of an ideal is the promise of a new reality. The human mind is ever throwing out before itself new goals and overtaking them. Prayer is an expression of this onward movement of the soul. It is the opening of the mind and will upon a larger vision.

There is, however, a constant danger that prayer may become mere form or sentiment. It has to be

guarded from declining into "vain repetition" and "much talking." There is a false mysticism in which the soul is wrought to a fine frenzy, and the natural contact with reality is lost. The usual tendencies to activity are overwhelmed in too great a flood of imagery, or fixed too intently and narrowly upon one idea. That faith seems very exalted which no longer needs the slow and tedious processes of ordinary life. The mystical tendency in human nature wearies of law, of cause and effect, of intermediate steps in attaining its purposes. It yearns to transcend the dull path of the plain pilgrim and find some direct, immediate access to God. But every venture of this kind ends in a clearer recognition of the necessity of work as well as of prayer. Whenever either of these wings of the soul is unused, the only course possible is a circle which constantly narrows with increased effort and ends in a fall. Prayer without work results in shallow sentimentalism. Work without prayer leads to blind drudgery. The mind cannot be sound without the activity of the muscles. All thought, all revery, all science, all art, all worship have their ultimate significance in the total life-process in which they arise. They all perish when they are taken out of this inclusive experience of the whole nature of man.

This insufficiency of prayer as a separate thing is emphasized by the New Testament teaching of its dependence upon character. It is the prayer of the

righteous man which availeth much. And here there seems to be a circle; for prayer has been presented as a means for the attainment of character, and now character is required as a condition of efficacious prayer. And it is one of those logical circles which must be accepted, but only as a circle which ever expands. It means that prayer must be sincere. It must express the truest and highest nature one possesses, and it must also sincerely undertake the realization in ordinary life of the elevation and strength gained in the moment of devotion. Character and prayer are never twice the same. They grow. Each helps the other. The good man gets new outlook, new ideals, when he prays, and thus becomes better than he was; while the prayerful man tries to put his prayers into practice and from every test he discovers the necessity of other prayers, and learns better how to pray. The righteous man is the earnest man, who does the best he knows, and continually seeks fuller knowledge. It is doubtless with God much as it is with men in heeding and answering petitions. Men desire to know what kind of a heart and will are back of the requests which come to them. An honest, industrious soul gets a good response; and then if he uses well what he gets, he increases his credit. It is reverent to believe the same of God and of the moral order of the world.

The effects of prayer should be studied in the light of its nature and of its relation to work and

character. Much confusion concerning the effects of prayer has arisen from the marvelous way in which coincidences are continually mistaken for cause and effect. Savages and civilized men are likely to conclude that the rain which comes after prayer for rain is the result of that prayer. All adverse facts are easily explained away. If the rain does not come, then the prayer was not earnest enough or there remained some unknown sin which prevented the proper influence. The prayers may be continued for a longer time and be joined in by more people. This is interpreted to mean the exertion of greater influence with the divine Being and the fact is ignored that the longer the "dry spell" the greater is the likelihood of rain. Among the natives of Australia the rain-makers are careful to perform their ceremonies for procuring rain just at the approach of the rainy season. It is obvious to modern science, and even to ordinary observation, that rain is determined by certain climatic and meteorological conditions. In the tropics of Africa or South America prayer for rain any morning is sure to be answered before night, but in the great Sahara desert no prayer for rain seems effective. The only consistent petition for a shower in the desert would be one accompanied by some great engineering plan for the removal of mountains, the irrigation of the district, or some other gigantic effort to change the very structure of the earth. Nothing is gained for the cause of religion by the attempt to put it in

opposition to the course of nature. On the contrary, the order and stability of the physical world is reason for the utmost religious gratitude and thanksgiving. Through its laws it may gradually be controlled and utilized for ethical and spiritual ends. No calamity could be conceived greater than that which would result if there were some power in the universe which could at once answer all the conflicting, though devout, prayers which pious people offer.

The most important effects of prayer are primarily subjective. There are doubtless objective, material, and social effects, but they are often clearly the indirect and secondary results of subjective states. This is, moreover, the conviction of people to whom prayer is a most important and real experience. In a recent statistical inquiry among a variety of persons of different ages and temperaments, 83 per cent reported that they believe the results of prayer to be wholly subjective. They do not discontinue the practice on that account, but declare that they receive power through it. As the religious life enlarges and is refined, it emphasizes the attitudes of resignation, of openness to instruction, of co-operation with the divine will. Petitional forms of prayer become less conspicuous, while the sense of communion and of contemplation increases. The petitions which do persist are for attitudes of mind and dispositions of heart, for wisdom, knowledge, sympathy, and love. The Christian thinks

of God as having the character and goodness of Christ, and he therefore seeks in prayer to gain the mind of Christ, to have his spirit and devotion. He seeks to imitate the life of Christ in its inner graciousness, simplicity, and fidelity to truth. In such prayer one gains self-control, courage, and patience. The striving for such a goal brings its own compensations, its comfort and strength.

The teaching and example of Jesus afford correctives to puerile and extravagant conceptions of prayer. In the prayer which he taught his disciples he put the emphasis upon seeking spiritual qualities of life, reverence, resignation, forgiveness, and strength against temptation. When he prayed for his disciples, it was that they might come to possess a certain disposition and oneness of mind. It was in his own agony that his habitual prayer became most intense, the prayer that not his own, but the Father's will, might be done. That was the great achievement of his inner struggle. Calvary was only the outward, physical consequence of Gethsemane. His prayer for resignation was not a prayer for release from labor or from responsibility. It was the victory over himself in which he attained the complete willingness to toil and suffer at his task even in darkness and pain. His resignation was not indifference. He was alert and faithful to the very end. In that hour in the garden he revealed the profound depths of his soul and disclosed the secret of his wonderful life.

But this uplift of mind and heart in prayer, this ideal companionship, does not exhaust itself in mere subjective moods. To free the heart from anger, to assuage grief, to renew courage and faith, is also to produce outward results. It means the restraint of violence, the recovery of peace, and the will to toil and endure. Ideas and moods are seldom credited with sufficient importance. They prompt and guide the hands. They direct the feet. They are the forerunners and creators of practical ventures, conditioning their methods and results. It requires little imagination to realize that the workman whose spirit is whole and sound has a clearer mind and a steadier hand for his work. His prayers may therefore increase his usefulness and his wages. Statistics indicate that patients in hospitals who are accustomed to pray have better chances of recovery. The explanation which the medical experts give is that those who pray do not so easily give up hope. They are calmer and submit themselves more completely to the physician's treatment. The sympathetic disposition which is created and strengthened by meditation upon the friendship and neighborliness of Jesus promotes kindlier feelings toward one's fellows. It tends to remove distrust and vindictiveness, and to create a nobler social order. It is therefore entirely reasonable to pray for the abolition of war, for peace between capital and labor, for the evangelization of the heathen and for the coming, in many ways, of the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Through the effect which prayer has upon the individual and upon the social order it may also extend its influence to physical conditions. When a community is filled with a common ambition it can work wonderful changes. It can close and remove buildings used for immoral purposes. It can change the course of rivers, make streams flow underground, create lakes, forests, and beautiful landscapes where before were swamps and thickets. It can remove the conditions of disease and make the air itself purer. It can enable millions of people to live in a territory where only scores of men could live in a "state of nature." The modifications in the physical world which man has wrought by intelligent and scientific control are far more marvelous than ever occurred in all the long ages of superstition and magic. And it is in the scientific control of life that prayer has its demonstrable significance. Science depends upon the working of the mind, and prayer, as here conceived, may condition and further the mind's activity. The "answers" to prayer may therefore be as objective and as materialistic as are the effects of human thought and concerted labor.

I have spoken of the different grades of prayer and of its effects. It may seem that such analysis and definition leave the experience itself unexpressed. To some minds reflection upon these intimate, vital moods appears negative and irreverent. Yet in the history of religion those most adept in prayer have

often been its wisest critics. The great mystics have distinguished different planes or stages of prayer and have prescribed the means of ascent to the highest. Jesus forbade his disciples the use of ostentatious and merely formal prayers, and gave them a model of direct and simple devotion. The apostle Paul insisted that prayer should be intelligent and reasonable as well as sincere and earnest. He objected to prayer offered in unintelligible speech because then the "understanding is unfruitful." It was his desire to unite devotion and reasonableness. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also," he exclaimed.

But at last prayer is an active attitude. It is a cry of the soul, an appeal of the will. It is neither calculating nor self-conscious. It is the speech of the heart in an ideal companionship of mutual faith and trust. It is the child talking to the Father. It is the beloved revealing her heart to her lover. It is the throb and surge of the heart in its grief, its anxiety, its hope. It is the craving of the blind for light, of the hungry for bread, of the oppressed for justice, of the weary for rest. It is gratitude for goodness. It is thankfulness for gifts. It is praise for the wonder and mystery of life. It is the troubled, grateful, aspiring human soul speaking to God.

One who has neither been frightened away from the inner depths of his being by the scoffer and the skeptic, nor lost the way thither through neglect, returns there in all experiences for renewal and

direction. There he finds symbolized highest ideals of duty, clearest words of truth, and loftiest visions of beauty. He talks with the Great Companion as with one who brings new meaning into the day's tasks, gives rest to the weary and heavy-laden, and makes the yoke easy and the burden light.

PRAYER

O God, thou Great Companion of our hearts, our fairest vision of mercy and truth, of love and justice, we commune with thee in all our ways of life. In thy presence, as from a noble height, we behold the far-stretching vistas of our days: great things become great and small things small. In the warmth of great love our hearts open to wisdom and beauty and move with kindness and patient sympathy. Our wills are strengthened toward goodness and against evil. Our joy is multiplied in every earnest task and in all good pleasures. With thee we would be co-workers to redeem the waste places within and without. Renew our faith in the gracious kingdom of love and righteousness and may we have the will of Christ to labor for its coming in all the world. AMEN.

X

THE LIFE

BY

ALBION WOODBURY SMALL

THE LIFE

In him was life, and the life was the light of men (John 1:4).

Suppose we try to imagine the wisest, most unselfish, most far-seeing man that could be made up by combining the best and strongest political qualities which were present in the best and strongest of our American presidents. Suppose the most worthy and dependable political traits of Washington, and Jefferson, and Jackson, and Lincoln, and Garfield, and Cleveland, and McKinley were fused into one political prophet. Suppose that man were to become a citizen of Servia, or Albania, or Roumania, or Bulgaria. Suppose he dedicated his life to winning the Balkan peoples over to his political standards.

What would come next? Practically just what came next in the case of Jesus. At first, while he had no following, he would be ignored as a harmless freak. When he began to get a hearing for ideas not in favor with the ruling classes, they would put him in the list of political suspects. When his influence actually became embarrassing to the authorities they would crucify him. In later centuries, after the Balkan peoples had achieved less barbarous civilization, and had perhaps formed a single state, they might revive his memory.

They might reconstruct him into a national hero, like Wilhelm Tell in Switzerland. They might idealize themselves and him at the same time by using him as the symbol of all their supposed national virtues.

For about nineteen hundred years, the world that calls itself Christian has been trying, by any means short of recognizing the literal meaning of his crucifixion, to glorify the man who was crucified. All this time he has been doing for this same hedging world more and better than it knew. No one can foretell how long it must be yet before the wisdom and the righteousness of this world may arrive at the level of outlook and of endeavor which Jesus represents.

So far as we can make out from the record, Jesus was the most impressive combination of sane and sincere and strenuous living that has occurred in human history. The sublime simplicity of the revelation in this exhibit has been beyond our reach. To bring it within our range we have tried a multitude of magnifying inventions. The best which we can claim as a result is that we have confused the spiritual substance with a countless variety of distracting accidents.

Several years ago the owner of an orange orchard in Florida proudly led me to the show-piece of his estate. It was a tree loaded with ripening citrous fruit of more different kinds than I had ever seen before. The owner said there were sixty varieties

growing upon the one stock. That tree was a symbol of Christendom today. Unnumbered varieties of religious ideas have found the memory of the man Jesus a stock upon which to graft themselves, and in union with which to grow.

In what I have now to say, my one point is that Jesus has been like the trunk of that tree, in his relation to all sorts of moral and spiritual fruits. For our present purpose, I am not concerned with any of the theological theories about Jesus. I am trying to present the historical fact that, since the story of his life began to spread over nearer Asia, and Northern Africa, and Southern Europe, Jesus has been a vitalizer of every moral and religious growth that has flourished in the Western World.

It is plain truth that this fact has not always been on its face to the credit of Jesus. Up to the present moment, by far the larger part of the religious effort of Christian men and women has been spent in grafting either undeveloped or overdeveloped or wrongly developed branches upon the Christian stock. Human nature rarely provided anything else. If they produced at all, these wild or withered branches naturally produced after their kind. According to their own quality, they turned the vitality of the stock into rank or insipid fruit.

These positive and negative phases of the same fact must both be faced, if we would find the true value of either. On the one hand, innumerable grades of religious character, innumerable types of

religious belief have drawn strength from Jesus. On the other hand, for their own purposes, in terms of their own peculiarities, these types of religious belief and life have reconstructed Jesus. There has been a different Jesus for every sectarian group. It is as though each of the sixty varieties of citrous fruit on that Florida tree had alleged of the stock upon which they were grafted, "Its sap is the particular grade of acidity or sweetness which marks my character." Throughout the Christian centuries, every man of rugged religious and moral impulses has instinctively claimed Jesus as a man after his own heart. He has attributed to Jesus the sort of qualities which he most admired. He has tended to overlook the other qualities, and to misjudge the balance of the other qualities blended in Jesus' character.

Now, it certainly is not true that Jesus would have looked with equal favor upon all the types of moral and religious belief that have drawn strength from him. It certainly is not true that all the ideas and programs which claim the sanction of Jesus deserve equal favor from us. The central fact is that Jesus lived a convincing life. His life did not convince everybody at his own time. It has not convinced everybody yet. All through the centuries, however, it has more than held its own while different types of life have had their turn. The sort of life that Jesus lived has persistently reasserted itself as the appropriate life for men. It wears. It

comes out of comparison with other qualities of life strengthened in its prestige. It proves to sustain more and more tests of experience. It dignifies and vindicates our mysterious human career, because that kind of life more and more affirms itself as the consummation toward which all mortal interests move.

In a word, Jesus lived intensely, humanly, socially. We are growing more and more convinced that this is living genuinely, spiritually, eternally. At all events, there has been, so to speak, a continuous transmission of blood from him to every man with spiritual vitality enough to be stimulated by this life.

From beginning to end, Jesus' ministry might be described as a variation of the appeal: *Live to the full those qualities and policies of life which are healthy and health-giving.* Jesus was the biggest reinforcement that the spiritual side of us has ever received in our conflict with the sensuous side. He was the biggest reinforcement which our social side ever received against our selfish side. The sort of evidence of this which might be collected all along the Christian ages is of a kind with the challenge of St. Paul in the twelfth chapter of the letter to the Romans. From the opening note, "present your bodies a living sacrifice," to the closing refrain, "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," the passage is a bugle call to moral campaigning upon an advanced frontier.

The Christian appeal has always been from the lower in us to the higher, from the selfish and the immediate to the human and the ultimate. No loftier ethical note has ever been struck than the same apostle's rendering of the Christian exhortation in his letter to the Philippians, "Whatsoever things are *true*, *honorable*, *just*, *pure*, *lovable*, *reputable*, by all that is virtuous and praiseworthy, pay attention to these things."

Jesus was consequently full of the spirit of discovery as to what *is* healthy and health-giving. Every sort and condition of men facing moral problems have felt themselves akin with his attitude toward problems. More life and better life was his aim, and he was ready to scrap former rules of life whenever he found them hindering more than they promoted the particular expansion of life then due. When he lifted the law of the Sabbath to its higher moral plane, in the revolutionary proclamation, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," he at the same time set the pace for exploration of a whole higher moral realm. Every rule and every institution is made for man, not man for the rule or the institution. This was virtually the discovery which has lately been rediscovered in the physical world, and by stimulation from physical science it has assumed the place of master-key in human science. The most crucial scientific conception today is that of function. Everything physical or moral is first stated and

then appraised as a term in a system of cause and effect with everything else. This is a functional world. The indicated business of this world is to function as efficiently as possible toward the most important purpose which human insight can discover for the world—*a steady output of men and women of progressively higher quality.* Life, more abounding life, was the title of Jesus' vision, and every modernist who breaks through the conventionalities that obscure the real Jesus feels that he was vital with that explorative spirit toward life which commands the most respect today. We are partly conscious of more human possibilities than we have realized or can frame rules for realizing. We want the campaigns of human achievement to go on. We want every limitation to human achievement to be swept away. We want every resource for human achievement to be opened wide, that this crude and juvenile humanity in us now, and which will be in many generations after us, may have the fullest scope to become its destined self. We want the limited ideals and the partial rules for realizing them, which mark the successive frontiers of previous human achievement, to be preserved and remembered as way-marks and as memorials of brave and precious pioneering, but we refuse to be tied to them. In the spirit of the men and women who reached those goals, we must press on toward farther goals within our reach. The more whole-souled we are in this resolve, the easier it is

to perceive that we are keeping company with the spirit of Jesus.

The moment we attempt to *define* the qualities which made the character of Jesus vital, we find ourselves within the field of controversy. No two men may be able to go far in precise agreement upon definitions. One proposition already made in another form is safe, however; namely, Jesus continually signalized elements of conduct and character which the intelligence of society more and more tends to affirm, and which the conscience of society more and more tends to indorse. The illustration which contains all the rest is his standard of individual rights and duties: "He that saveth his life shall lose it," and all that goes with that conception and springs from it in the career of Jesus. To the majority of people up to the present moment the conception is preposterous and unthinkable. On the other hand, scores have grown into hundreds and thousands and millions who have tried faithfully to make the idea their rule of practice. Slowly but surely the wisdom of the world is learning that the idea rests down upon the basic principle of human life. Whether we like it or not, whether or not we think this would be a better world if it were built on a different principle, the fact is that this human world is a scheme of the exchange of sacrifices. The world lags in prosperity because most of us are trying to evade our kind and quota of the sacrifice which gives the world its going

power. The world will reach the crest of its prosperity when we learn the full economy of each person's sacrifice, and when each person volunteers his kind of sacrifice for the good of the whole.

Meanwhile, most of the sacrifice through which the world is approaching self-knowledge and spiritual new birth is involuntary. Dr. Edward Judson quaintly expressed this profound truth in Boston the other day: "If we succeed without suffering, it is because someone has suffered before us; if we suffer without success, it is because someone will succeed after us." Every fire-escape on a modern building is a monument to the thousands of men, women, and children whose lives were the price of our present means of escape from modern buildings. Not a convenience nor a comfort of modern life that was not bought by the inconvenience and discomfort of generations that did their work unconsciously demonstrating human need of better supplies. Not a penny of wealth, not a recourse for the relief of pain or the prevention or healing of disease, not an item of knowledge, not a trifle of artificial beauty, not a perception of right and wrong, that has not been borne to us on a tide of somebody's patience and toil and tears.

When men fully understand the world, they will understand that Jesus was right about sacrifice. They will understand that sacrifice is loss only so long as it is exceptional and forced. When we face sacrifice loyally, when we join in a general economy

of sacrifice, when we refuse knowingly to gain except by intending a gain for somebody else, the balance of the total transactions with sacrifice will have passed from the debit to the credit side of the world's account. This is a vicarious world. Not as stupidly conceived by the mediaeval theologians who located the one vicarious act of importance in the death on the cross. Life is vicarious in that its processes begin and continue and end with exchanges of sacrifices, wherever there are moral beings.

Summing up all that we know about him, something like this seems to me to express the heart of Jesus: *Life is an infinitely good affair if we can only get into its real current. Life is controlled in the long run by powers which are bringing greater things to pass than anyone can imagine. The secret of the successful life is to deal loyally with the great encompassing scheme of life—not selfishly, not as though each of us transients in life were the whole of life; not sordidly, as though the more transient and the more trivial parts of ourselves were standard for our whole character and destiny. Let us then put our utmost candor and earnestness into life, at whatever cost to our temporary and partial selves. Thereby we shall find our real selves, and we shall build ourselves into the infinite self.*

Most of the varieties of religious vagary which have grafted themselves upon the Christian stock have been more or less partial and petty parodies

of this vital conception. Perhaps it may not be said with truth of any one of them that it has failed utterly to draw life from the Christian current. The vital stream from which Jesus himself got his force is so broad, and so deep, and so pure, its energy is so sincere, that human crudity has ever since been obliged to reduce its volume, and to dilute its quality, before it could be even partially turned to human purposes.

Jesus' spiritualizing of life is so thorough that we have neither intellectually nor morally understood it. On the contrary, from St. Paul down, there has been a countless succession of substitutions of intricate theory for that frank loyalty to the unfoldings of the higher life which was the substance and the dynamic of Jesus' character. Much as civilization owes to St. Paul, for working out a philosophy of Christianity—a theological scheme for the conquest of the world by the spirit of Jesus—yet the Pauline factor in civilization is to the more essential Christian factor as a spectrum analysis is to sunlight. The one is a fallible attempt at intellectual comprehension. The other is the substantial working of the powers to be comprehended.

We may voice Jesus further in this way: *We live at our highest, we live in closest partnership with all that is most durable, when we enlist for all we are worth in realizing the best that is visible to us in the way of worthy living. We are excluding*

ourselves from sharing in the consummations of life in the degree in which we fail to live out that conception.

Presented to a selfish world, this version of life could not escape being received in a selfish way. If we could reduce to precise words the exact mental terms of belief held from first to latest by the vast majority of professing Christians, they would exhibit chiefly impossible confusions of unmoral or immoral ideas huddled around crudely selfish conceptions of individual salvation. There has always been a saving element of spirituality in people, however, which has been better than their thinking. Not the intellect, but the heart and the conscience of Christendom have kept historic Christianity from sterility. There has been more salvation during the Christian centuries than the creed-makers could understand. Whatever their intellectual beliefs about themselves, and about the scheme of things, many Christians remembered and unremembered have caught some of the spirit of life from Jesus. They have not been perfect men and women, but they have had more spiritual vitality than they would have had if they had not sympathized with Jesus.

St. Paul was not merely a Pharisee with a new *theory*. He was a Pharisee partly un-Phariseed by a partly spiritualized conscience.

St. Augustine was not merely a reformed libertine. He was a reformed libertine with a vision of

a spiritual kingdom, and a love for the service of that kingdom.

Loyola was not merely an ignorant and savage soldier tamed and turned into a religious zealot. He was an ignorant and savage soldier, fighting for the things that an ignorant and savage soldier wants, turned into a less ignorant and less savage soldier, fighting with different weapons for things which in his belief were the needs of the world.

The countless company of simple and sincere followers of Jesus, from the humblest to the highest ranks of life, have seldom been either saints or sages in any very exacting sense of those words. They "obtained a good report through faith." They rose above their instinctive selves. They followed the "light of life" into paths of beneficent righteousness toward their fellow-men, into which their mental penetration could not have led. Together, these real "soldiers of the cross" have at least conquered a somewhat effective "truce of God" in the world, if they have not yet established a spiritual kingdom.

In short, the vitality of Jesus was a social germ in a selfish world. Lineal fertilizing from that germ is progressive mental and moral appropriation of the truth that "selfish" and "spiritual" are contradictory ideas. Life cannot be genuinely spiritualized that is not genuinely socialized. Nor should there be any confusion here with "socialism" in the current sense. The meaning of the word

"social" today, as a term of systematic thinking, is this: "Social" is the index of a state of things in a given group of persons, whether a family, an industry, a nation, or a civilization, in which there would be incessant exchange of service the one with the other, on the basis of recognition that all the persons in the group are plain human beings, and that the requirements of their common humanity should be the decisive factor in governing the conduct of each and all. "Socialism" is a sectarianism like any other, with its mixture of truth and error, of good motive and bad. The fundamental truth, which all earnest and candid people in Christendom are groping after, is that the human career is a community affair, and must be taken in good faith by all men and women as a community affair, before men and women will have adjusted themselves to spiritual reality.

A generation ago children in many religious groups were still learning from various catechisms versions of the question and answer, "What is the chief end of man?" "To obey God and enjoy him forever." Nothing has meanwhile occurred to impeach the substance of the doctrine thus affirmed, but much has occurred to require insertion of more specific bills of particulars into the doctrine than our forefathers required. Today, men and women who piously learned that answer, and who still believe it symbolizes the truth, are equally sure that it does not express enough of the truth. In

their homes, and schools, and religious journals, and churches, as well as on the street, they are passing along the same tradition in less religious form but with richer religious content. Today vital Christianity tends more and more to voice itself in variations of the creed: *The literal business of the Christian life is to keep busy establishing the conditions which will do most to fill the world with fitter men and women—fitter physically, fitter mentally, fitter morally, fitter spiritually.*

This marriage of the spiritual and the social renderings of life is producing a distinctly modern type of faith.

If I may venture a personal confession, my own familiar Pillar of Fire and Pillar of Cloud, in this wandering toward the Kingdom, is a vision of *the American religion.* As it invites me, it is not presumptuous with the conceit that it has opened new sources of knowledge and interpretation; nor, on the other hand, is it arrogant with the affectation that it is superior to the homely needs of human beings. It is not a sectarianism that has triumphed over competing sects, nor is it an indifferentism which is stirred by none of the problems that make sects. The Jew, the Catholic, and the Protestant might each in time learn that, in a true sense, this religion is both the trunk from which his peculiar faith has spread, and that it may also be a branch grafted upon his special type of belief. Each might contribute to his rendering of this common religion all

the spiritual force there is in his distinctive creed. The documents of this religion are every scripture, canonical and uncanonical, in which a seeker after God or an avoider of God has set down an authentic truth encountered in the experience of either. Its ceremonial is not a single prescribed ritual. It is every outward form of worship by means of which anyone feels himself brought nearer to God and to his fellow-men. Its polity is the concerted purpose of every American, to join in a perpetual league for finding out the quality and program of life which gives sincerest heed to the spiritual possibilities in every one of us. Its work is dedication to an ideal of life in which each shall give his best to all the others, and receive their best from all the others in promoting a method of life in which our dealings one with another, from the most trivial individual act to the most momentous public policy, shall do all that is possible toward realizing the most and the highest of which each and all of us are capable. Its last appraisable outcome will be the utmost refining of our spirits for everything which may hereafter answer to our most aspiring thought of "the inheritance of the saints in light." I do not know of anything short of *the American religion* which can be more than a settlement of preliminaries to the genuinizing of our lives.

It is a feeble travesty of the religion of Jesus which does not find in the human process equally necessary divisions of labor for the evangelist and

for the sociologist. If it had no other support, this is elementary social psychology. Those evangelists and sociologists are mental and moral infants who can discern no big spiritual process which requires their co-operation. My emphasis is intentionally and properly upon aspects of the outlook which are most prominent from my own professional viewpoint. "Except ye be converted" and become loyal citizens of the Kingdom of God, there can be no Kingdom of God for your citizenship. On the other hand this being "converted" means something more than exchanging indifference to being "damned" for preference to be "saved." I am therefore incidentally emphasizing this qualification by speaking primarily for the Kingdom side rather than for the citizenship side.

I have taken special care to speak as though neither I nor those whom I address had ever heard of theology, except as a division of historical exhibits. I have intentionally avoided all attempt to square what I have said with any formal religious creed whatever. I have simply tried to compress into these few moments the moving picture that every candid student of history sees when he fixes his attention on the kind of influence which Jesus has exerted during the latest nineteen centuries.

No one has fairly started toward an understanding of the painter's art until he has learned to appreciate Raphael both as a climax and as an inspiration of aesthetic impulse.

No one can have gone very far toward appreciating past and possible expression of religious aspiration through music, without having formed his standards by acquaintance with Bach and Mozart and Beethoven.

No one knows very much more than the *word* "science," who has not acquired some of the habits of science which have been taught to a few by the great searchers for physical and human truth, the Lavoisiers and the Rankes and the Darwins.

No one has passed the primary grades in weighing and measuring and projecting life, with proportional valuation of all its meanings, until he has begun to learn life in the school of Jesus. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

PRAYER

Our heavenly Father: We thank thee that we do not have to force ourselves to think of thee. We thank thee that thou art a part of our every thought. When we want thee, thou art not far from every one of us. When we turn away from thee, we are quickly reminded of thy presence. We thank thee that thou art with us, sometimes most impressively, when we are trying hardest to be alone. We thank thee that, whatever our need, we have found recourse in thee. Whenever we have been in moods like those of little children, we have found refuge in thee as a parent. Whenever we have been stricken or smitten with the heavier sorrows

or stripes that fall to the lot of older men and women, we have found comfort and healing in thee. Whenever we have been most confident and inclined to arrogance, we have presently been reproved and corrected by finding that, at our utmost, we are still limited by the thought of God.

We come to thee now as men and women charged each with a part of the work of the world. Compared with thine eternity, we are creatures of a moment. Compared with thy providence and resources, we are futile. Yet among our fellow-men, for the brief space of our working years, we are trustees. To each of us is committed some important task, perhaps tasks of several different kinds. Thy will is to be done through us, perhaps in more than one way. Wilt thou then enable us to see our service, which might otherwise seem trivial and irksome, in such light as part of thy design that it may be glorified. With every enlargement and enrichment of our thoughts about the meaning of life, may we increase in ability to think of thee, and to act toward thee, as the Master Workman, the Architect of time and eternity, with a place in thine infinite plan for the best that each of us can perform. Especially may we learn to trace thy purpose, not apart from the human beings with whom we live and move, but first and foremost in everything that we can understand about possibilities of edifying one another's lives.

In the fellowship of him who discovered the Heavenly Father as the Eternal Worker. AMEN.

XI

THE VOICE OF GOD

BY

BENJAMIN ALLEN GREENE

THE VOICE OF GOD

Thus saith Jehovah (Amos 1:3).

Our Bible is a great book, crowded with the sayings of the ages. It is full to the brim and running over with every variety of strong statement. Here are disclosed the deeps of profound feeling, marvelous outreach of thought, the surrounding mystery of life, the reaction of the visible world on the soul compelling it to form judgments, the vivid realization of inescapable law, the pushing on through three score years and ten and seeing judgments pronounced on conduct as unmistakable as those declared in a human court of justice; and, all the while, the possibility of a man shutting his eyes, going back into his own moral being, and hearing voices which he knows belong to the eternal world of reality.

This is the large sweep of the Bible. It is the gathering up of a literature extending over a thousand years, in which a reverent people are seen seeking after God, and in which God is making himself felt and feared and loved and worshiped. There is great loss when we do not understand the Bible in that way. We are not to pull down this volume to our little verse-by-verse narrowness—culled verses at that.

It is a big world-book. It has in it a world of literature; every level of expression, from simple

prose, matter-of-fact statement, to the most daring reaches of metaphor and hyperbole. The strong statement here and there is the endeavor of the soul, just at that point, to give expression to itself in the presence of a great, mysterious fact: too great to be completely compassed, but so real, at this one point of contact, as to be declared and emphasized with all the passion of conviction and with all the freedom of utterance which belongs to genuine spontaneity.

There are two distinct levels of teaching, and they belong to two orders of fact. The two orders of fact are: (1) the visible, tangible, material world; the world of flesh and vocal speech and eye perception; (2) the invisible, immaterial world; the world of spirit, of vision, and conviction. My body, with hands and feet, with lips and ears and eyes, belongs to the first order. My soul, with power of thought, feeling, will, with its sense of dependence, and its capacity for moral discernment and adoration of God, belongs to the second.

Sometimes the language of the Bible keeps up within the second level. For example, it says, "God is a Spirit; they that worship him must worship in spirit . . . . whom no man hath seen nor can see . . . . ye have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his shape." This is the high, spiritual-level language of the New Testament. And, in the Old Testament, it is equally explicit: "He maketh darkness his secret place . . . . I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on

the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him." And Moses, right in the midst of very different language, represents God as saying, "Thou canst not see my face; for no man can see me and live." The Bible speaks of God as the King eternal, immortal, invisible, but asserts most emphatically that he has a way of making himself known to men in the flesh. How?—being understood, spiritually discerned, by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.

So, we have this paradox—what some small critics call this contradiction—in Scripture: "We look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal."

These are the two levels of fact, the natural and the spiritual; or, in other words, the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible. Sometimes the Bible uses the language of the one level and sometimes that of the other; for the most part, that of the visible, audible, material. Whenever the phraseology drops down to that lower range of speech, it is always speaking figuratively. To eat the bread of life; to walk with God; to taste and see that the Lord is good; to hear the voice of God; these are all figures of speech. They are now; they always have been.

The Bible, itself, says so, in discrimination. And yet we have confused the use of Bible language. When it is emphatically teaching spiritual truth, it insists that the everyday, conversational use of language be interpreted in the light of corresponding teaching in the spiritual level. "No man hath seen God at any time." "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard." "God reveals by his Spirit." "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned."

The language of eating and drinking, of tasting and seeing and hearing, is used, because we understand that well. We know what the relish of food is, and the strength which eating imparts. Taste gives us a juicy, palatable knowledge of the interior qualities of fruit. When we see a face, when glance catches glance and eye looks deep into eye, there is a consciousness of presence not felt before. And when we hear a voice speak, we know we are getting the thought, the desire, the purpose of the speaker. These things we know well in physical experience and human fellowship. The language of these is seized upon to express corresponding experiences in spiritual satisfaction and fellowship with God. It is speech on the lower level trying to hint at the more exalted things in the higher.

It is so in the Bible, as it is today in common usage. And yet we read the lower-level language of the Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, and we think we are at such disadvantage, as compared with men in earlier times. Then, "they heard

the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." But of course all that language is to be interpreted in the light of that after-phrase, found plentifully enough in the New Testament, and intended to be in vogue today: "Walk by faith"; "Walk in the Spirit"; "Walk in the Lord." It means that God and man come so near to each other that man knows it, as surely as he knows the footfall of a friend and the accent of his voice. In the same way God is walking, and his voice is heard in the cool of the days of this twentieth century. Evening shades make many a man think of God. His voice makes itself heard when all other voices have died down. Adam had no advantage over man today.

And then you hear people say, "Oh, if I only could be certain; if I had a 'Thus saith the Lord,' as they had in the times of Moses and the prophets!" And they will cite you all that conversational familiarity of speech, as though it were in the higher realm of privilege, and we were living down in the valley of commonplace. It is a misapprehension, a misinterpretation from start to finish. In an English story there is a picture of a nineteenth-century hero journeying to Mount Sinai, prostrating himself on its bald summit, and crying for a new revelation: "a pathetic, if overdrawn illustration," says Brierly, "of the soul's ceaseless desire for some authentic utterance to it from heaven." It is on a par with the passionate desire of the crusaders who

thought if they could only get to the Palestine grave of our Lord, some miraculous help would come. There was already laid up for them the question, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

The whole teaching of the Bible from the time of Moses to that of Christ is a progress, a development, a better understanding of God's will. "Thus saith the Lord" did not measure absolute certainty and completeness on the divine side, but partial apprehension of the divine will on the human side. The prophets came, after Moses, with their increase of emphasis on the moral. And Christ came still later; he lifted the whole range of teaching to a loftier, more spiritual level. We listen and we hear Christ say, Moses said this and that, he suffered some things because of the people's hardness of heart and the brutality of the times, but I say unto you something deeper and wider. It is in the spirit of Christ when Paul says, "The times of that ignorance in those days God winked at, but in these days, now, he commandeth men everywhere to repent." Talk about law written on tables of stone by the finger of God, as though that language meant more than its possible meaning today! What *can* it mean in the light of Jesus' subsequent comment? The prophets themselves said that the conception belonged to a crude age. The time is coming, declares Jeremiah, and he also prefaces his saying with a "Thus saith the Lord," when "I will put my law

in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people." Is not writing on heart tablets an advance over writing on stone tablets?

"Thus saith the Lord." Does that use of language in Old Testament times mean greater certainty, closer relationship to God, and surer apprehension of his will than we have in these days? Let Christ himself pronounce upon this. He said, "Among them born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; and yet he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he"; his light is greater; his apprehension of God's will and purpose clearer.

"Thus saith the Lord" did not mean outside, vocalized breath, but inside personal conviction. God was speaking to the heart and mind and conscience. The prophet listened with the inner ear, and when he was full of pent-up conviction that he had discovered the Divine will, he burst forth with that formula, "Thus saith the Lord." And in that name he said to the people, "Give up this selfishness, this jealousy and fighting, this drifting toward the world; sweep out this vileness from your thinking, and get you a clean, pure heart in the sight of your Maker." When the prophet said that, he knew God would have him say it.

There are two scriptures I wish to cite, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament,

which give to us a good, intelligent, spiritual conception of what the voice of God means. In Psalm 27 we read, "When thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek." It is the *heart* of the Psalmist that responds. He heard the message in his heart, a whisper-drawing of the Almighty. It was face-to-face fellowship in the soul. That is what the entreaty-voice of God meant in olden times; a voice within and behind all other voices. Isaiah puts it in a little different way, but it means the same thing: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." Conviction of the right is made so strong that it seems as if a voice were actually speaking, the voice of someone close by but out of sight. And that is the experience of men today who shut their eyes in prayer and listen for the whisper of God's direction—that attitude, that waiting, that genuine desire to know God's will, when we have done our best; until, by and by, conviction grows out of nebulous questioning into assurance of duty. Here, for example, is a man disquieted, distressed; life's harassing cares and cross-purposes, and, added to all else, men's stinging criticisms, have come in upon him. In the midst of it he hears this sentence, "Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." Then, thrilling through the vocal utterance, as electric message leaps through the copper wire, there comes an assurance which his soul recognizes as pledge

and promise from the Eternal; and he steps out into the calm of noble, sweet-spirited endurance never known before.

The New Testament passage is this: "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in." If any man! That is in the charter of the Kingdom of God. You know what is meant there; no special, miraculous voice; but at the heart of every man Christ knocks, God knocks. If any man listen and open, I will come in—human and divine fellowship in any mortal man's heart who will.

Voice means the expression of thought, desire, purpose. To hear God's voice is to feel a conviction that you have his thought, his desire, his purpose.

John B. Gough felt the touch of a man's hand upon his shoulder; he heard a kind voice inviting him to his office and to a sober life. Within the touch and the invitation Gough felt Christ knocking at his heart. When he got to his bare room and thought of the friend's work and of his own miserable manhood, the voice of God spoke louder within him than everything else: "Quit this drink; another glass and you make hell the surer; what hell is you know well enough already." A voice of God? Yes, that was the voice of God reaching a profligate soul. Gough said, "I'll quit; Lord, I'll quit"; and he came out of his Egyptian bondage into the promised land of sobriety, into popular sway for good, into a continental benediction.

Then, there was that famous Lacordaire, at one time adding to a brilliant university education irresistible eloquence at the bar; the world of society at his feet. One day a friend came to his room and found him sobbing, heartbroken. A voice had spoken within, showing him all this hollow mockery of superficial splendor; glistening bubbles on the surface of a deep, briny, moaning sea. He heard the voice; he followed it, and became a mighty preacher of righteousness. His call was as genuine and clear as that of Isaiah.

Charles G. Finney tells us of his experience; an American in these modern times. Many, still living, will say they used to feel, when he preached, that God's voice was speaking inside Finney's voice. When he was converted, the love of God came like a flood tide into his soul; but soon he fell into doubt. "Is this reality or is this illusion? Am I on solid rock or am I deceived?" Then it was he poured out his soul in prayer, opened his being to the coming in of overwhelming proof. And when assurance came in again like a tide, he says, "The Spirit seemed to say, Will you doubt, will you doubt? I cried, No, I will not doubt; I cannot doubt."

I tell you, God is not farther off because Moses is dead, Elijah, John the Baptist, and Paul. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, the Eternal, the Near-by, One who can speak. We have found out in these late years that not only can a man's voice go speeding on across a continent in its copper

pathway, but more marvelous still, he speaks out over the tossing Atlantic, into the free, untracked atmosphere, and his voice is heard thousands of miles away in the darkness and the storm. And cannot God who made the lips and ear of man, who gave him all this ingenuity, cannot he speak so that man, in modern times, can hear? I tell you, he can; and I dare announce myself a prophet of the Lord and say, "Thus saith the Lord, I can turn the whole universe into a whisper-gallery and find the man I want, and make my voice echo through his soul."

The pictorial, realistic, passionate language of the Bible is right. It is the only way to speak, when you feel God near and eternity at the door.

Do not think that, in these days, we have got away from God's judgment and his hell with reality in it. What do the present-day ethical judgments mean, which are driving crooked men back into obscurity and infamy? What mean the awful cries that come up from society when it has run its wanton course? There are skeletons in the closets of palaces, and wrecks in prisons; and the voice of God said it would be just that way, if men persisted in sin. You cannot recklessly, foolishly, and safely tamper with fire and flood and dynamite. There are laws inescapable. God's voice is added to the experience of man. It were well that we hear that voice. And before it sounds the note of doom, may

this be ours to repeat, all a-quiver with conviction, and with joy which no man can take away:

> I heard the voice of Jesus say
> Come unto me and rest
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I came to Jesus as I was,
> Weary and worn and sad;
> I found in him a resting place
> And he has made me glad.

PRAYER

O God, Maker of Heaven and earth, Creator of our life, Father of our spirits: We come to thee, not with our feet in walking, for thou art where we are; but with our thought in recognition of thy nearness, with our gratitude in acknowledgment of thy bounty. Our inmost being yearns for thee. Even as the babe reaches for its mother, so our heart feels after the living God. We know thou art over against our necessity; invisible, but thou art there. The yearning with which thou hast endowed us is too capacious to be satisfied with things or with creatures like ourselves. The deepest in us is unmet if thou thyself dost not meet us. The firmament speaks of thy handiwork, the heavens declare thy glory. Oh, speak thou afresh in our hearts thy personal word, Seek ye my face, and our heart shall say, Thy face, Lord, will we seek. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? We know thou hearest us. Cleanse our nature with a deeper cleansing that we may the more

quickly detect thee when thou speakest. Suffer us not to wait for earthquake, fire, or stormy blast, but in the still small voice may we hear thee say, This is the way, walk ye in it. Make us pure in heart that we may see thee; and, with this inner vision clarified, may we behold wondrous things out of thy law, thy gospel, and thy providence. So may we come into blessed fellowship with thy personal self and with thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

XII

RICHES AND LIFE

BY

EDGAR JOHNSON GOODSPEED

RICHES AND LIFE

And he said unto them, Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15).

Some years ago in an Oxford common-room I met a man noted among his fellows for the range of his reading. He was, I was told, the best-read man in Oxford. He did not take an active part in the table conversation nor make any notable contribution to it. In general, the tide of talk flowed past him and left him absorbed and silent. For some forty years he had been a fellow of his college, and with no teaching to distract him and in an honorable fidelity to what he conceived to be the opportunity of his position, he had given himself to reading and information. He had not had occasion to publish or to lecture, and when a few months later an accident terminated his life no potent voice of moral counsel and influence was silenced, no ready pen of scholar or reformer was stopped. He had had great possessions, but their abundance had not magnified his life. On the other hand, it was of Lincoln that his law partner said, "I have never known a man who read less or thought more." Intellectually, it is true that one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that one possesses.

A man well known in American education, who in his later years walked these quadrangles, used to

say in his last days that it was wonderful how much of one's theological accumulations a man could unload as he approached life's end. Those of us who remember Dr. Northrup in his later years will recall how, on those rare occasions when he could be prevailed on to speak, he dealt almost invariably with a single theme, in which his whole religious thought seemed to have become merged. It was the immanence of God. "The universe," he used to repeat, "is ablaze with God, from the atom to the archangel." In the realm of theology it is true that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.

But what of the chief realm of all—the religious realm? Does it hold here too? It would be easy to show how in later Judaism, as doctrine and practice became more and more detailed and concrete, vital religion withered and declined. Seldom has a religion been richer in specific possessions than was Judaism in the time of Jesus, and seldom has a religious heritage been more highly prized. The sacred law had expanded into countless interpretations, and the pupil who forgot one of its tenets was thought little better than a suicide. But Jewish thought became so absorbed in this wealth of minutiae at the circumference of religion, that it lost sight of the center. The people tithed mint and anise and every herb, but passed by the weightier matters, judgment and mercy and the love of God.

They were so busy obeying God that they forgot to love him.

Nor did the early Christians escape the same mistake. With all that was helpful which came to them from Judaism and other religious movements of their day, there came much that proved a burden rather than a benefit. From Judaism they drew a simple and elastic organization, a collection of inspired scripture, and an order of worship. But along with these useful acquisitions came others less desirable; faith began to become rigid, theology and religion to be identified, a new Sabbath and new fast days took the place of the old, the Lord's Prayer became a formula to be repeated thrice a day, the formal replaced the spiritual, and legalism, liberty. Religious rivalries bring with them their temptations to covetousness, and no temptations are more subtle or perilous.

In Christian history, too, over and over again as creedal refinements have multiplied, the spirit and influence of the founder have dwindled. It was so in the age of councils, when Nicene and Chalcedonian hated each other with a perfect hatred, in the name of Christ. The emphasis they laid upon doctrinal differences left little room for interest in the essential matters of Christian life. Each autumn in Madrid there is publicly read a papal bull of the sixteenth century granting to all Spaniards the plenary absolution anciently given by Urban II to the crusaders, but this supposed wealth of religious privilege

has not made the Spanish mind tolerant or humane. Again, in post-Reformation times Luther's freedom was succeeded by a Jewish rigidity of religious ideas and practices which left scant scope for the activity of the spirit. Instances may be multiplied in which as the content of religion has become objective, extensive, and specific, its life has declined in vigor and truth.

In these days of ours a great historic church has been debating with acute interest the matter of changing its name. Another American communion, intellectually perhaps the most cultivated among us, has been considering the renunciation of an inherited item of its faith, relating to the salvability of non-elect infants. The Young Men's Christian Association has been talking of a change in its membership requirement, to make its work more efficient and elastic. The failure of all these proposals only points the moral more acutely. There are many possessions of religion transmitted by the past to the present which, judged by Jesus' standard, do not enrich us, for they do not make life great and strong.

There is a sense, of course, in which each age is the heir of its predecessors, and is rich with all their accumulations. But there is a sense too in which each age stands by itself upon its own feet and must have a society, a science, and a faith of its own realization. One of our novelists somewhere tells of an old man who spent years in collecting curios and

works of art until he had gathered a rich and valuable collection. Showing them one day to the man who was to be his heir, he said to him, "Do not keep them. If you want a collection, sell them and begin to collect anew. These will never mean to you what they have meant to me." It was the collecting and the discovery that had been the joy, and it was that joy of search and discovery that the wise old man wished to bequeath to his heir. The new collection might not be the equal of the old, but it would mean more in the younger man's life because it would be his in a sense in which the earlier collection could never be.

Is not that a parable of religion? Incalculably rich with the inherited experiences and collections of previous generations, religion sometimes seems fairly smothered in its own affluence. Cathedrals and libraries, liturgies and theologies attest the zeal and the success of former generations in the supreme quest. In these great achievements they recorded their struggle and their victory, and expressed their religious life. What do they mean to our day? Are we to settle down into possession of them, complacent in the abundance of our possessions? Or must we, if life is to be all it may, repeat their conflict, win our own discovery, and enter into their joy?

We are witnessing a curious phenomenon in these days. The novelists and men of letters are coming to the aid of religion. What has been happening

of late in current fiction needs no description. More than one leading American novelist has produced a novel in which what the writer deems essential Christianity is frankly embodied. An English essayist, never before I believe marked as a specially religious man, has prefaced a recent book with these words:

> The fact that underlies this book is this: that in the course of a very sad and strange experience, an illness which lasted for some two years, involving me in a dark cloud of dejection, I came to believe practically, instead of merely theoretically, in the personal immortality of the human soul. . . . . This is not all. I was led to perceive that I had been living life with an entirely distorted standard of values; I had been ambitious, covetous, eager for comfort and respect, absorbed in trivial dreams and childish fancies. I saw in the course of my illness that what really mattered to the soul was the relation in which it stood to other souls, that affection was the native air of the spirit, and that anything which distracted the heart from the duty of love was a kind of bodily delusion, and simply hindered the spirit in its pilgrimage. . . . .
>
> The book . . . . aims at bringing out the fact that our life is a very real pilgrimage to high and far-off things from mean and sordid beginnings, and that the key of the mystery lies in the frank facing of experience as a blessed process by which the secret purpose of God is made known to us, and even more in a passionate belief in love, the love of friend and neighbor, and the love of God, and in the absolute faith that we are all of us, from the lowest and most degraded human soul to the loftiest and wisest, knit together with chains of infinite nearness and dearness under God and in him and through him, now and hereafter and forevermore.[1]

[1] A. C. Benson, *The Child of the Dawn*, pp. v, vi, xii, xiii.

This recent development of positive religious interest on the part of our literary men means at least two things: they have seen that a religious word needs to be said and that official Christianity—churches, pulpits, religious journals—are not saying it. This is why they are constrained to say it themselves. Their reinforcement carries with it a rebuke. And is it not a deserved one? The religious teaching of our day is overburdened by its heritage from the past. We are constantly told that the gospel is very simple, but a little reflection will show that the gospel as generally held is really very elaborate. Worst of all, in our embarrassment of doctrinal riches many of us have lost sight of proportion and values until the partisan formularies of the ecclesiastical politicians of old stand in many minds quite on a par with the great teachings of Jesus himself. The Gospels are religiously among the most compelling documents ever written. But they have been so literally and dogmatically treated that it is really to be feared that to many in our modern world they have become stumbling-blocks rather than aids to religion. The books of the New Testament written to aid devotion have been canonized into an authoritative scripture to control belief, so that the helpers of our joy have become the lords of our faith. The Old Testament which Jesus and Paul treated with a noble and discriminating freedom, has been made an article of Christian faith, with the principle of allegorical interpretation to disguise

its difficulties. More than one dogma of the Nicene time stands in popular Christian thought side by side with the greatest utterances of the prophets. Some years ago, at an ordination council, the candidate, a very bright young man, set forth his theological views with great fulness and ease, but as I listened to them it almost seemed to me that one might hold all he set forth without being a Christian and that one might even be a Christian without holding any of his views. The abundance of the religious things which he possessed had so overwhelmed him that he was in danger of losing sight of the very essence of the gospel.

Beyond doubt there is a need for clear thinking and rigid discrimination as to what the real essence of Christian experience and faith is, and of simplicity and candor in stating it. We must disabuse our minds of the notion that to be Christians men must accept the accumulated mass of all the religious ideas that have ever gone under the Christian name. Thus we may begin to escape from that abundance which impoverishes and enthrals.

The Christian life is not a harvest, inherited in storehouses from the past; it is a seed to be sown and cultivated, and harvested in its turn. Forgetfulness of this is one reason there is so much profession of religion which denies the power thereof. Our age is full of people who have without exertion come by inheritance into great riches, but who are unskilled in their care and use; as we say, they do not know

the value of money. Spiritual inheritances are in even greater danger of being misprized or misused. There is a duty of individualism in religion. No one can realize all types of religious experience in his own. At best he can make some one type, or a blend of two or three types, his own. There is great danger that people meaning to be religious will begin externally and try to appropriate the life-product of some individual's experience, and find only confusion and artificiality in the effort; instead of beginning as he began and developing a Christian life and a religious experience from within, through the normal and gradual integration of a Christian point of view with the facts and experiences of life. The infant, no matter how strong or rich, does not begin with the bill of fare of the athlete or the epicure.

But it is in the presentation of Christianity to others that this principle is most necessary. There are two ways in which a thoughtful religious inquiry may be answered. One may readily rejoin with some well-framed phrase of Scripture or tradition, cast in the thought-forms of five or twenty centuries ago; that is, one may answer by a formula. But if we would speak to the heart we may give an answer that has been worked out in our own search and struggle, in words of common modern life. Which is more effective? The old is good; indeed probably it is even better than the new. But if it be not our own in this deeper sense of religious origination

it will not reach the man at our side as many a humbler message born of our own struggle and aspiration will. How unreasonable to offer the religious inquirer the dogmatic formulas of bygone days! How few are willing to begin, with Jesus, and offer people the simple and compelling message of trust and love. Yet theirs is the message that wakens the heart and moves men still to rise up and follow.

It is no accident that in these days the religious appeal that is reaching students all over the world is the message cast, not in terms of dogma, but in terms of life. As each living age must clothe the eternal gospel in its own forms of thought, so in his measure must the individual do in his experience. Of all the stars in the heavens no two have precisely the same celestial outlook; yet the views from all of them are true, and how much richer the universe because of it. They

> remain
> A world above man's head, to let him see
> How boundless might his soul's horizons be,
> How vast, yet of what clear transparency!
> How it were good to live there and breathe free;
> How fair a lot to fill
> Is left to each man still!

We must remind ourselves again that Christianity is not so much a new creedal system as it is a new conception of values, a truer sense of proportions, essentially at variance with mere muchness of reli-

gious accumulations. Emphasis, accent, proportion, these are of the very essence of faith. It may indeed be possible to hold a great wealth of dogmatic and traditional possessions in conjunction with a real and vital Christian faith, but the danger is that the wealth will obscure the faith and come to possess its possessor. More than one kind of riches may hinder a man's entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. Some men's intellectual possessions have so increased as to absorb their whole minds. Their minds are museums or arsenals of facts and ideas; or "inexorable logic engines," insensible to the subtler influences of sympathy and aspiration. There is a religious wealth that carries with it an equal peril. The man of many religious possessions is in danger of forgetting that all are not of equal value and of losing his sense of proportion amid his overwhelming mass of treasures. We need sometimes to follow the merchant seeking goodly pearls, who found one pearl of great price and sold all that he had to buy it. That is far better religious experience than to tear down our barns and build greater and invite our souls to complacency and ease. Jesus realized the simplicity of life. Few things, he said, are needful.

But the chief peril of riches is unreality. Life becomes distorted and artificial. The religious experience must have vitality and originality. Truth that has been made one's own in real inward experience is worth all the dogmas of the creeds.

How quickly a religious teacher reveals whether his message is one of borrowed formulas or of inward conflict and conquest! The religious life lays upon those who would possess it, still more upon those who would proclaim it, the stern duty of winning it by deep and personal conflict with selfishness and doubt. There is a sense in which the greatest truths of religion never become real to us until we have in our measure reproduced the agonizing experiences of their discoverers, and drunk the cup that they drank. Out of such mortal conflict, whether in the search for truth or for righteousness, emerges a message of sincerity and power.

> Children of men! not that your age excel
> In pride of life the ages of your sires!
> But that ye think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
> The Friend of Man desires.

PRAYER

Generous Father, who givest to all men liberally and without reproach: Make us wise to find thee in thy gifts and prompt in gratitude and obedience. Forbid that we should in all our religious riches lose thee, or suffer them to hide thee from our trust and love. Quicken our devotion, strengthen our aspiration, increase our faith. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. AMEN.

XIII

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS

BY

HERBERT LOCKWOOD WILLETT

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father. . . . . Jesus saith unto him . . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father (John 14:8, 9).

It is beyond question that Jesus is increasingly conspicuous in the thought and affection of the world. From him in both directions the records of western life take their way. Into the Orient where he passed the short term of his life the influences he released are penetrating. No forces have been so potent in molding thought and creating institutions as those he inspired. Into human society he entered at a moment significant in its social and political experiences. All the great religious movements which have most profoundly interested humanity, save Christianity and Islam, were already in the field and had for centuries wrought at the task of enlightenment. Yet there was room for another and more potent force. There was even a measure of expectancy among those early peoples that new disclosures of the divine purpose might appear. The messianic hopes of the Hebrews were taking form. Eastern moral leaders had declared that somewhere in the West the true prophet should arise. Plato anticipated a better world-order, and Confucius taught that after him other and greater teachers were to come.

Yet in the advent of Jesus there was little to guarantee the fulfilment of these hopes. His coming was unmarked by portent or wonder. In the circle of the Galilean hills he grew up so quietly and simply that his fellow-townsmen later heard with astonishment the claim that he was even a rabbi. He accepted the modest tasks of his home and passed his youthful years as an artisan in a highland town. He was deeply interested in the religious life of his people and counted it a joy to go with them up to the capital at the annual religious feasts. When he learned that a prophetic voice was calling the nation to repentance in the region of the Jordan, he went at once and threw himself with enthusiasm into the movement in behalf of better things. And when the preacher of the desert was suppressed by the authorities, Jesus gathered a few friends about him and continued the mission for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the lines already announced.

His methods were simple. He went about the country with his followers teaching, preaching, and rendering aid to all classes, especially the sick and the poor. Less spectacular than the rough prophet of the Jordan, he yet won to himself great companies of enthusiastic followers, especially in Northern Palestine. He fulfilled none of the messianic hopes of the time, and at first was not taken seriously by the leaders in church and state. Yet he was watched with increasing suspicion by representatives

from the capital, who viewed with disquiet his growing popularity, and attempted to discredit him with the people. Seeming to anticipate his inability to live long or to journey far, he gathered about himself within the wide circle of his following a little company of men of provincial life, yet more sensitive to his ideals than any others he could find. To these men he made known his purposes, charging them to interpret to all men what they had learned from him. He spoke much of the Kingdom of God, the new social order of peace and good will, which he was attempting to bring into fuller expression; and that term was a useful watchword, attracting many to his following. But aside from his temporary popularity in Galilee his followers were never numerous. And so completely did the leaders of the community fail to understand the unselfishness of his purpose that at last, through fear and envy, they brought him to his death.

No great world-movement was ever less pretentious in its beginnings and in its first issue more frustrate. Yet in spite of his seeming overthrow the ideals of Jesus began from the very first to find effective lodgment in the mind of his age. He had not many friends, but those he made remained firm in their confidence in him. They believed in his life, his teachings, and his program. He so inspired them with faith in him that they were able to withstand the seemingly overwhelming facts of his downfall and death. Out from the shadow of his

crucifixion they emerged with a triumphant confidence that death had no dominion over him. They made known to all men the fact that they had seen him alive and victorious after his enemies had their way with him. Confident in this faith and in their devotion to his teachings, they spread his message in circles far beyond the little country in which he had lived. Within the first few generations after the close of Jesus' ministry his disciples were numbered by thousands, and soon the Christian society was so widely extended and so potent as to possess a social and political significance no longer negligible.

Into the complex of forces which made the Roman Empire in the age of Augustus, Jesus entered as almost the least notable of figures. Within three centuries his was the most impressive name on the lips of men of the Mediterranean world. Constantine, a Christian emperor, was seated upon the throne of the Caesars, and Jesus had well-nigh displaced the Roman Jupiter. Nor was this political success of Christianity, questionable as was its influence upon the church, without value as a symbol of the growing pervasiveness of Christian ideas among the nations of the West and the East. Through the centuries Christianity has gone forward inspiring mankind to the attainment of the larger life. Not without obscurations, reactions, hesitancies, and surrenders, but on the whole with a persistent purpose, the Christian society has carried

forward the enterprise of its Master. Never was this purpose so confidently cherished as today. There are daily proofs that Jesus' interpretation of life is on the way to complete mastery of the world. His word possesses a power it never had before. His teachings dominate widening circles of the race. His disclosure of ethical and religious values is taken with increasing seriousness. His message concerning the divine life becomes convincing and authoritative to groups never before touched by other than ethnic religious ideals.

But the religion of Jesus, though it has always claimed him as its center and exponent, and has maintained its devotion to his person and purposes, has not remained the same in successive periods. It has discovered in him constantly enlarging values. It has progressively discerned, both in his personal faith and in his teachings for humanity, new ideals and fresh points of emphasis, so that Christianity has presented an ever-changing appearance to the world. With unfailing devotion to the person of Jesus, and what it conceived to be the ruling ideas proclaimed by him, the church has presented an essentially different Master to each age. From the Christ of apocalyptic expectancy in the first century to the Christ of social redemption in our time, the new interpretation of each generation has taken the most convincing and timely form. Never was this change more apparent than in the present period. Radical has been the

modification wrought in the church's estimate of Jesus in recent years. No greater revolution has occurred in the history of Christian thought than that in our time relating to the person of Jesus. This is not the result of mere academic discussion as to the reality of the historical Jesus, nor does it concern chiefly the distinction between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Christ of theology and experience. It is rather a change wrought by the necessity of meeting and answering the challenge of our day regarding the value and significance of Jesus for character and conduct. Many of the former assessments of our Lord are seen to be obsolescent, if not obsolete, in the light of this fresh form of inquiry.

The Jewish Christian church, which inherited the older Hebraic hope of a coming deliverer, the burning theme of apocalyptic spirit and literature, seized upon the conception of a coming Messiah and applied that title and function to Jesus. That hope was rife in the latest period of pre-Christian Judaism, and the air was full of such political expectancy in the days of Jesus. As a means of focusing attention and securing interest Jesus accepted for himself this designation. But it is evident that he felt the remoteness and inappropriateness of the term as employed in the vocabulary of the time. He had little interest in the crass messianic expectations of the people around him. When he accepted the title at all he eviscerated it,

and then filled it with a new content of moral worth. Yet the church has persisted through the centuries under the spell of this partial and materialistic notion of the Jewish community. There are still considerable groups of Christians who attempt to relate the work of Jesus to that Jewish term. The early church believed that Jesus was soon to return in a physical and visible form, and that the victory of his kingdom would be apocalyptic and catastrophic. To a surprising extent the church has continued to hold to this materialistic and unspiritual view, and to that extent to misinterpret the entire spirit of Jesus in his promise of perpetual presence with his people.

The early Christian society laid eager stress upon the Master's works of power. The belief in miracle belongs to no one race or period. Most religious teachers have been credited by their followers with acts of wonder. The Old Testament contains many records of the miraculous. And there was in earlier ages a certain expectancy of the marvelous in the reception of any new teacher by the people. From such men deeds of wonder were to be anticipated. That Jesus healed the sick and performed other acts which had the value of marvel to the men of his time seems clear from the early Christian sources. He laid no particular stress on these features of his ministry, but rejoiced in his power to bring help to his fellow-men. His works of healing were the natural outgoings of his

sympathies to the afflicted and the distressed. But to his followers such manifestations of mastery in the domain of nature were the tokens of his authority, the credentials of his mission as a teacher sent from God. And though the early church, following the teaching of Paul, gave them a comparatively unimportant place in Jesus' program for humanity, it furnished the suggestion which later centuries developed into the dogma of the supernatural, unearthly Christ, whose life was manifest in constant miracle, and whose efficiency was demonstrated by acts of power.

The most outstanding characteristics of that religion in the midst of which Jesus grew up were its forms of sacrifice and its priestly ministries. Most religions of antiquity have presented similar sacerdotal and ritualistic features. The early Christian community was mostly Jewish by race, and its familiar conceptions of religion were in terms of blood offerings to be presented at the sanctuary. Life under the Law was by no means limited to these external forms of religion. But they were naturally the most impressive. For this reason no figures of speech were more effective in illustrating Christianity to this type of mind than those borrowed from the temple services. It was hardly avoidable, therefore, that Christianity should be invested with sacrificial values. In popular thought Jesus became implicated in a priestly scheme of mediation and atonement. Much of the language

of the New Testament is colored by this conception. In consequence, in the theology of the church that which was essentially figurative became fundamental. The forms and phrases of the Jewish institution were transferred to Jesus and his program for humanity. Christianity became, to this extent, a priestly, magical institution. Its primitive, simple values for character were obscured by an elaborate system of priestly rites.

Catching at the words of adoration in which the first disciples poured out their love and reverence for the Lord, Christian teachers through the centuries have elaborated definitions so metaphysical and titles so mysterious as to come dangerously near the point at which Jesus is robbed of all human value, and spiritual religion is plunged into that very abyss of confusion from which it was the task of the great prophets and of Jesus to rescue it. At times the church seems almost to have forgotten the Father whom Jesus worshiped and sought to interpret. In strange forgetfulness of the Master's example, it has substituted the worship of Christ for that of God. In apparent jealousy for the honor of our Lord, it has searched the vocabularies for new words in which to frame creeds competent to voice a sufficiently exalted conception of his divinity and deity. In the refinements of trinitarian definition, Christianity has sometimes gone baldly over to polytheism. Indeed, such have been the lengths to which the creed-making process has gone

that even Jews and Mohammedans, strong in their monotheistic convictions, have stood astonished and indignant in the presence of what seemed to them nothing less than Christian tritheism.

And belief in these definitions and categories men have called faith, as if the rich life of God disclosed to the world in the character and teachings of the Master could be cabined in the terms of metaphysics and speculation. Such forms of Christian faith, so called, have been elaborated and defended with courageous and remorseless fidelity. In behalf of such definitions men have contended with the passion of devotees and the consecration of saints. And all the time the Master, whose purposes lay far afield from these scholastic subtleties, was suffering practical denial in the house of his friends.

The results of these tendencies to limit the work of Jesus to the realm of intellectual interests are easily perceived. He was lifted quite out of the realm of normal human experience and made a supernormal, unearthly being, unreal and ineffectual. He was divested of the qualities which give him value for the winning of character, and removed to a cloudland of speculation, where he touched but remotely the lives of the men and women who most needed his aid. He ceased to have significance for the common world.

Furthermore, religion by this process has been warped from life to dogma, ritual, and organization. The church has been robbed of its vitality and

power. In consequence Christianity is too little regarded as a necessary and worthful possession, and its ruling ideas are called into doubt. Men cannot take seriously a system of ideas so remote from actual human interests. But worst of all, this interpretation of Christianity has seemed to imply that the God it was seeking to make known is concerned with unimportant and second-rate interests. Even if all the contentions of the earlier dogmatic Christianity could be proved, they fail to make the impression of significance on the minds of thoughtful men. Granting that these things are true, in what manner do they concern the man on the street? He cares for few of them. And a religion that gives the impression that it is mainly concerned with trivial things easily acquires the reputation of believing in a trivial God. Beyond this point it can hardly go in the direction of failure.

The task of the church in recent days has been that of facing frankly the facts and attempting to adjust itself to the needs of the hour in the light of its historic truth. The result has been a gradual, and yet effective, rejection of no inconsiderable amount of its former theological possession. It has set its definitions in the light of history and experience and found many of them of little worth. It is therefore relegating such to the obscurity of discarded and worthless ideas, once popular, and even useful, but no longer of value. It has re-examined the hope cherished by the early church,

that Jesus would soon return in visible and bodily form to lead in a campaign, for which the gospel he taught had proved ineffective. It is rejecting those theologies of despair which stress the imminent appearance of the Lord, and is returning to a truer appreciation of the Christian message as the power to save the world, and of Jesus' words of assurance, "I am with you always."

It is taking the same course with miracle. It perceives that whatever may have been the element of wonder in the life of Jesus, he regarded it as of little worth and appealed rather to the more normal elements of persuasion and conviction for the success of his ministry. Even if the miracles were once convincing proofs of Jesus' authority, they have no longer such value. Men believe in miracle today, if at all, because they believe first of all in the Christ in whose life these works of healing appear.

Salvation cannot longer be regarded as a magical process. The atonement must be conceived as a plain, human task, undertaken by Jesus as the representative of humanity, and not achieved by him in a mysterious, transcendental way. The traditional doctrine of the vicarious suffering of Christ has become to most men incomprehensible, unconvincing, and unconsoling. More than this, we gain nothing for Jesus by searching language for new terms of adoration in which to describe him. He sought nothing for himself, but every-

thing for the Father whom he adored, and in whose friendship lay the secret of all his being. To speak of Jesus in terms which imply his Godhood is merely to confuse terms and to set obstacles before simple and trusting faith. The present generation craves religion, but it does not want it at the expense of clear and honest thinking. It is asking for help in its quest of God, and that help the church is abundantly able to afford if it is willing to accept the clear and explicit leadership of Jesus in the great adventure.

What is left of Christianity if these earlier and traditional ideas are given up? Are they not the very essence of the historic faith? In their abandonment, or transformation, is not the long and arduous labor of the church surrendered? There are those who would so affirm. But it is significant that a multitude of testimonies insist that by the removal of definitions which are not essential there is gained the opportunity to face the real issues of religion. And it is to this attitude that the church is attaining at the present time. With fresh insistence it is making known its faith in Jesus. Nor has it surrendered aught of vital import in its change of emphasis. Its message is given with a new urgency. It has discovered fresh depths of power in the life of the Lord.

What then has the church of modern days to say about Jesus? What are the vital elements of its faith in him? If it is not to exhaust itself in

affirmations of a secondary character, such as his fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, his realization of Jewish messianic hopes, his supernatural birth and ministry, his procurement of human salvation by mysterious, not to say magical, means, and his unearthly and metaphysical nature, what is to be its fundamental testimony? It is clear that all of these traditional claims might be true of him, and yet possess no special significance for human life. What are the positive declarations of the church as to his character and service?

The significance of Jesus for human life finds expression in part at least in the fact that he is the heart and the hope of humanity. In him all its dreams have come true. Its aspirations for personal life and social enthusiasm find realization in him. All that the prophets hoped to attain in a better and more ideal humanity has been reached already in his life and program. All that the bards and seers of non-Hebrew peoples yearned to behold in the form of personal nobility and public service he illustrated and brought within the range of attainment. All that philosophy had striven to attain by earnest thought, and religion had endeavored to realize through its search for the divine, Jesus brought to expression in personal holiness and in a program of universal good.

He is the revealer of God. In him are disclosed the qualities of love and righteousness, which, as he made men understand, are the essence of the

life of God. The deepest need of the world is the Father. Jesus knew and loved the Father as has no one else in history, and he made God real to men by awakening in them a love for the Father and the things the Father loved. More than this, he created in them a passion to accomplish the work of adjustment and service in which the Father is evermore engaged. By virtue of his disclosure of the life of God he has vindicated his right to be called in the highest sense the Son of God, for he is the truest manifestation of the Father's character and purpose.

He is the interpreter of life. He spoke of his plan of living as the Way, the method by which completeness of life is to be attained. What he meant by this certainly includes the assurance that whoever takes his point of view, adopts his attitude toward God, toward man, and toward the universe, cannot fail of success. He did not ask men to accept some list of definitions which he formulated, nor to conform to a catalogue of duties which he sanctioned. Rather he disclosed the realities of being, in harmony with which life comes to its noblest estate. The principles he announced and illustrated are basic and fundamental, as self-demonstrating as the laws of perspective or the rules of mathematics. These principles constitute a program for every individual and every social group.

And the proof that they are fundamental and final is the fact that they actually work when tried. This is the ground of the new appeal of Christianity.

The old intellectual objections, the academic difficulties raised against the program of Jesus, have no longer the slightest validity. It is characteristic of our generation that it brings all things to the test of experience, and here the claims of our Lord are completely vindicated. Jesus and his first friends insisted that this would be true. They said that whoever tried his plan with serious purpose should know. The choice spirits of the ages have said the same. The glorious names in the story of human attainment of the divine life are the witnesses of this claim. Paul, Augustine, St. Francis, Thomas à Kempis, Horace Bushnell, Spurgeon, and Phillips Brooks are of that elect and innumerable company who have proved the value of Jesus' plan by the great experiment of life.

But the modern man prefers to make the test for himself. He wishes to take nothing for granted. And whenever he makes trial of Christianity in a serious and thoroughgoing way he finds it completely true. To put it to such a test is the privilege of every investigator, and the results, though varied, are reassuring. If anyone today is still unconvinced of the worthfulness, efficiency, and finality of Jesus it is because he has not tried the great experiment for himself, or has missed the point of emphasis.

Jesus is the exemplar and the inspirer of life. His program is complete for every class. The social order of which he spoke is perceived to be

practicable. His ethics severely applied are the only working basis of a satisfying social order. His teachings are today penetrating the life of the occidental world in which they have been for centuries formally acknowledged, but only superficially applied. In the Orient the ideals of Jesus are slowly, but certainly, changing the most ancient of civilizations. In Africa and the islands the gospel of Jesus vindicates itself in its power to transform and enlighten the crudest types of savagery. The older faiths feel the vivifying touch of the message of the Christ. Strange revivals of religious feeling manifest themselves in the heart of faiths older than Christianity, and the serious student of religion is convinced that these new manifestations of religion are inspired by the presence of Christian teaching and influence. Once again as evermore through the centuries the touch of Christian truth vitalizes the dead forms of religion, and the brightness of that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world is penetrating the twilight where the dead gods wait.

In the light of these convincing proofs of the power of Christ it is now perceived that every claim made for Jesus by the historic church is true. Some of these claims were unimportant and superficial, but at base they are valid. In the light of a more vital interpretation of Christian truth, many of the older formulas that seemed meaningless and irrelevant attain significance and worthfulness.

That which critical inquiry seemed to cast away now comes back with new and larger meaning. None of the old values of Jesus is lost to those who search for their deeper worth. He is the fulfilment of prophecy, when prophecy is studied at its highest level. That onward sweep of divine purpose of which the great moral leaders of Israel were the proclaimers finds its consummation in his purposes for humanity.

He is the Messiah, not in the small measure of the term as it found its place in the Jewish vocabulary, but in the sense that no other term in the wide ranges of that religious movement was large enough to suggest any approach to the greatness of his character and ideals. He is supernatural, not merely because of miracle in his life, though the Gospel records are the witnesses of his works of power; but in the larger sense that he has revealed to us in himself the higher life, beyond the ranges of selfishness and sin, and thus linked humanity with the divine in a new order of being, of which he is the supreme manifestation. He is supernatural by reason of his complete harmony with the divine order of the universe which is essentially supernatural, and in which God is eternally realizing his gracious purposes. He is the atonement of humanity in a truer sense than the older theology has realized, because he proclaims and illustrates the unity of the human and the divine as possible for all men. Through that gateway of suffering and service by which he passed to the

consummation of his ministry he calls all men to follow him, and thus to fulfil for themselves that redemptive work which he first undertook in behalf of all the race. In this atonement he is the representative, vicarious pioneer, passing first along the path of sacrifice which all men must tread in the new and redeemed society whose approach he proclaimed and for whose completion he taught his disciples evermore to pray.

He is, moreover, the final authority in the realm of religion, not because of any arbitrary assumption of rulership over the minds and consciences of men, but because of his disclosure of the final truths of being. He is the elder brother of the race, who has passed this way and knows all the secrets of the road. He is the friend who is engaged with us in the great adventure of life, and whose honor is at stake until the rest of us have won through like himself. Like the pilot, the physician, the master of any art, his is the authority of knowledge and sympathy. His call is to himself, to his ideals, his manner of life, his program for society, and his service for the world. And this call has all the authority of a divine imperative, because in response to it alone may be found happiness, efficiency, and the achievement of life.

He is the Son of God in the fullest sense of which human thought or language is capable. Beyond him there is no perfection visible. One need not quarrel with those who search the lexicons for terms

of honor to bestow upon him. There is no danger that his person and character will be overrated. The danger is that in the effort to give him a reverent and exalted title, clearness of thought shall be sacrificed and the reality of Jesus' great human experience shall be forgotten. He is the Son of God, but he is even more than this—the Son of man. That title expresses the completeness of his human experience, the intimacy of his relation with us, the ideal, representative character of his humanity, and the reality of his power to understand and assist the least of his brethren. It is the title he loved, and by which he named himself. Beyond all others it reveals his significance and his redemptive service. It is the badge of his sacrificial and atoning work.

PRAYER

Father of spirits: In thee we have our life. We have called thee by many names, but our great Teacher, the Lord Jesus, has made thee known to us as our Father and his. In the joy of that relation we find the fulfilment of our hopes, and the holy companionship of love and service. And in the clear shining of thy presence, our Master becomes more fully known to us as Brother, Teacher, Savior, Lord. Give us an ampler measure of his spirit, we beseech thee. Enable us with enthusiasm to take up the tasks he has left us. Strengthen us with courage and virtue for the great adventure of the holy way. And may we so live that to die shall be gain. AMEN.

XIV

HAS THE CHURCH A MESSAGE FOR THE MODERN WORLD?

BY

NATHANIEL BUTLER

HAS THE CHURCH A MESSAGE FOR THE MODERN WORLD?

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly (John 10:10).

The question whether the church has a message for the modern world cannot be regarded as merely academic. There are those who hold that it calls for a negative answer, that the church is obsolete or at least obsolescent, that it is outgrown, that the world seeks and needs a ministry that the church does not supply. That way of disposing of it must rest upon one of two assumptions: either that the church has forgotten her original message, or that that ancient message is not adapted to modern life, that it is impracticable, that modern life has developed situations and demands for which the church has no message, and that we must look to human experience and to secular education for light and guidance. Is this so? Herbert Spencer made the world familiar with the statement that the purpose of education is to train for "complete living." Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly." What is the twentieth-century ideal of complete living, and what has personal relationship to Jesus Christ to do with that ideal?

Whatever may be the twentieth-century ideal of complete living, it is clearly not the ideal which

at certain former periods has been entertained. Consider, for example, the ideal held under the dominance of the mediaeval church. There is a picture by one of the Italian masters representing the death of an old saint. In the center of the picture is the wasted and shrunken figure of the old man supported by strong arms and kindly hands. A group of friends has gathered to witness his triumphant death. The triumph is understood to consist in the successful termination of a long course of self-repression and self-discipline. The old saint has starved himself, and nature has given way, overcome by the determination of the spirit within. We look upon the picture with interest but without sympathy. It represents an ideal with which we do not agree. The notion does not prevail in our time that, for the sake of fulfilling the purpose of his existence, a man need starve himself to death or wear chains about his neck. We do not think that the purpose of the Creator involves that a man should go clad in filthy rags, or eat coarse or unpalatable food, or that he withhold himself from the brightness and beauty of existence, and the glory and power of knowledge, and association with wife and children and fellow-man, and withdraw into the darkness and gloom of a convent cell; rather we believe that God has made the world for us and us for the world, and that the effort of our lives should be, not to fight against the world, but to bring ourselves into harmony with it. We believe that

God has made all things for us richly to enjoy, and that, instead of being displeased that we should make the most of life and the world, he has given us his Son, that through him we might have life more abundantly. We feel that we have a right to use and enjoy to the utmost this good world in which we are placed, and we do not willingly subscribe to any doctrine or discipline that would deprive us of this right.

Perhaps it would be historically untrue, and therefore unfair, to state that the mediaeval church ever directly and intentionally taught these extremes of self-denial, but it seems certain that under the influence of her teaching men did practice these excesses; however, what is pertinent at this moment is that this ideal passed. The ideal of self-repression gave way to self-realization. The ideal of living for the world to come gave way to living for this world and this life, the ideal of mediaeval ecclesiasticism to that of sixteenth-century humanism.

This new conception of life affected man's attitude toward the life of the body. No longer was the body at its worst considered to insure the mind and soul at their best, but rather the body at its best was the indispensable helper of the mind and spirit. Browning has expressed this ideal:

> Let us not always say
> "Spite of this flesh today
> I strove, made head, gained ground
> Upon the whole!"

As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now,
Than flesh helps soul!"

And again:

To man propose this test.
Thy body at its best
How far can that project
Thy soul on its lone way?

And so of the attitude toward the whole of life. What man has done in this world, what man can do, the realization of human abilities, human opportunities—this was the chief interest. This ideal has well been called "humanistic," for it urged every human being to make the most of himself in this world. This was the familiar expression of the ideal.

This conception of life dominated Christendom for two hundred and fifty years, even to the middle of the nineteenth century. At first it glorified the Individual. The Perfection of the Individual, this was its goal. This was the watchword of the intellectual and political leaders of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But it took its rise in the early sixteenth century, in the movement known as the Revival of Learning. At this distance, it looks like an inevitable reaction from the Middle Ages. During that time the individual had little chance from either church or state. It has even been said that during the Middle Ages

church and state conspired to deprive the individual of his rights. Probably that is not wholly true, if it be interpreted to mean that the leaders of the church and state, with a perfectly clear conception of what was really due the individual, deliberately planned to defraud him of his rights. No doubt the most sagacious and influential leaders of the time saw clearly how much personal liberty might safely be intrusted to the masses of the people. Yet it seems certain that there was on the part of the leaders in church and state a good deal of selfish and wicked exploitation of the helpless many by the powerful few. But that was sure to end. Little by little the masses of the people acquired wealth and power and privilege and at last, after the darkness of ecclesiastical suppression, and after the darkness of political tyranny and oppression, the people threw off the authority of a blind church leading the blind, and of a selfish nobility knowing no rights but its own desires, and asserted that no one may stand between a man and his God nor between the individual and his rights—and we have the revolution in France, rationalism in England, and in Germany the splendid humanism of Kant and of Goethe, Heine, and Schiller. The glory and splendor of life were for every man and woman. This ideal expressed itself, in the realm of culture, in the term "self-perfection"; and in the realm of religion, in the expression "the salvation of the individual soul."

This ideal of making the most of this world and of one's self, at first apparently admirable, is seen to be consistent with utter selfishness and indeed to tend directly to it. Self-perfection—what could be a finer expression of self-centered interest! Even the appeal of religion was of the same sort—that a man should insure the salvation of his own soul. Bunyan's Pilgrim presents to us the spectacle of a man who, having realized that he was in the City of Destruction, and that there was a place of safety, closed his ears to the cry of wife and child and neighbor and put forth all his efforts for his own individual salvation.

The nineteenth century witnessed the utter transformation of this conception of a complete life. Still holding to the notion that one is to make the most of himself, we have come to see that we do and can make the most of this world and of ourselves, not by ourselves, but only in relation to others. Our studies in psychology, history, and the science of society, as well as our practical experience of life, have taught that there is no such thing as an unrelated human being. If you could find an unrelated being, he would not be human. If you deprive a man of human relations, you destroy him. It is a scientific discovery that we live the abundant life not as individuals but in relation to others. Never before has the social idea been more familiar and influential. It is the dominant note in all our ethics and in the organization of business, and education.

We value a man, not by the richness and abundance of what his life contains, but by the value of its output. This is the twentieth-century ideal. Matthew Arnold expressed this when he said, quoting Bishop Wilson, that the purpose of culture is, not to make an intelligent being more intelligent, but rather to make reason and the will of God prevail. Paul said the same thing in the words, "that a man be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work." Not culture but fitness for good work, this is our measure of the largeness of a man's life; not what he gets out of life but what he puts into life.

Now it is never to be forgotten that this social idea of life, so familiar to us, is the Christian idea of life. It is the direct fruit of Christianity and of Christianity alone. Others, no doubt, before Christ had caught the idea, but he alone made it vital. It has pervaded no civilization save Christian civilization. It is the spirit of Christ dominant among men that has, for us, utterly changed the position of woman, the care and education of children, the treatment of criminals, and the care of the insane; that has brought about the liberation of slaves, the modern organization and administration of charity, the reform of society. To ruin modern life, you have only to take out of it what Christ has contributed to it. The twentieth-century social ideal is the Christian ideal.

The practical question at this point is, How are we to insure that this newer and larger conception

of life will actually dominate our boys and girls, as they emerge into manhood and womanhood? Probably it has never been more distinctly present to the consciousness of educators that the pre-eminent problem of the school is the problem of fixing the relation of boys and girls to citizenship. The broad interpretation and successful accomplishment of that end would seem to embrace in itself all the other desirable ends of education. Intelligent interest in the common welfare; intelligent purpose to promote the things best for the city—justice, private and public honesty, fellowship—these are what give value and meaning to plans for the "city beautiful," housing reform, parks and playgrounds, industrial education, efforts for social betterment. Are the boys and girls growing up really to care for these things? How are we going to guarantee that? "By education," we have said, and the press demands it, and doubtless this is the true answer, but true only if we conceive education somewhat differently from the way in which it has been conceived traditionally.

Shortly before his death, the late Professor William James, in a lecture at the University of Chicago, referred to the traditional conception of education, that it consists solely in that discipline which trains people to think and to know; and he remarked that we used to hold that if we were successful in that discipline, we should secure the millennium, our logic being, that if people only know

enough and think clearly, surely no one will wish to be a thief or a murderer or a disturber of the peace; and this assumes that all transgression is due to ignorance or unclear thinking. But he reminded us that this conclusion is not justified by observation and experience. No matter how thoroughly you inform and train the intellect, it always remains the servant of the passions. What men do is determined, not by what they know, but by what they want to do. "Reason," said he, "appears to have been given to men chiefly that they may discover reasons for doing what they like." Professor Huxley, in a memorable paragraph enumerating the elements that enter into a liberal education, arrives at the same climax. "That man," said he, "has had a liberal education whose body has been so trained in youth that it is the ready servant of his will and does with ease and pleasure all that as a mechanism it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logical engine with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working order ready like a steam engine to be turned to any kind of work and spin the gossamers or forge the anchors of the mind; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental forces of nature and of the laws of their operations; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions have been trained to come to heel by a vigorous will; the servant of a tender conscience; one who has learned to love all beauty whether of nature or of art;

to hate all vileness and to esteem others as himself." Such expressions show that we now insist that the ultimate value of education is to be expressed not in terms of intelligence but in terms of conduct and character, and that the supreme fruit of education is sound and appropriate conduct.

Accordingly we are seeking to supply the deficiency in our educational procedure by "religious education." But we shall fail in our effort if we assume that religious education means simply the supplying of religious instruction. There are in fact two distinct ends proposed in religious education. One of these ends is the imparting of religious information and the securing of general religious intelligence by studies and recitations in the history of the sacred book, in the biographies of religious leaders, and in the study of religious doctrines. The other of the ends sought is the establishment in the individual of the religious disposition and character. Either of these ends may be secured almost independently of the other. At all events, the imparting of religious instruction does not necessarily secure the religious spirit and character. We are coming to feel more and more distinctly that the securing of the latter of these two ends is absolutely essential to complete education. Education and religion propose really the same objective, namely, the relating of every individual intelligently and soundly to the world in which he is to live. There can be no complete edu-

cation that does not inculcate the sanctions of religion. Without these, morality always tends to become in effect merely a code of etiquette and conventions. The discipline that will insure good citizenship, the discipline that will actually inject into the veins and build into the nerves and muscles the disposition and habit of doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God and helpfully with our fellows, must be charged with the vital energy and splendid idealism of the gospel of Christ. It must bring the individual into vital personal relations with him, so that his ideals, motives, principles shall be actually taken up into the simple first-hand relations of life. Faith in Christ means precisely that. In the realm of religion faith has exactly the same meaning as everywhere else. Faith means accepting a thing so warmly and vitally that we are willing to act upon it. Faith in God is acting as if there were a God. Faith in Jesus Christ consists in acting as if he were our authority. Faith *must* express itself in works. If you have faith in Christ, your hands and feet and tongue express it. If you have faith in Christ, you know that God really cares for individual children and men and women, and all who are in any sort of trouble become to us the expression of his direct appeal, for he comes to us in men, women, and children, and we can practice the principles of Jesus nowhere save in our relation to men, women, and children. In his picture of the last judgment he

makes the ground of commendation or condemnation the way in which we have behaved toward our fellow-men.

There are those who are alarmed at the tendency to socialize religion. We have even been warned against the "danger of social service." That warning is indeed timely and needed. Doubtless it would be a fatal calamity if the churches should become mere agents of social service. That is properly where the warning is needed. It would be a sad error to hold that the whole of religion consists in organized charity, in better housing, in improved sanitation, in parks and playgrounds for the alley children, and in fresh-air sanitariums for sick babies of the poor. Surely these are not religion, but surely they are the expression and fruit of religion, and it is hard to conceive of vital religion in the modern world that does not express itself in such ways. It may even be conceded that the church as such should not be the direct and immediate agent in organizing these things, but if the church does not function somewhere along the line in social service, and if she does not inculcate the sort of religion that realizes itself in the organization of society, she is not the church of Jesus Christ. He was the greatest socializer of his gospel, and there can be no danger in the social service to which the interpretation of the teachings of Jesus will lead us.

In a great and characteristic address, Dr. John Clifford of London said:

A truth that is being ground out of the European logic mill of life for the coming generations is that the churches must take the lead in the recovery and advocacy of the true social ideal of Jesus expressed in those key phrases of his ministry, "the Kingdom of God" and "the Kingdom of heaven." Surging to the front all over Europe, with an energy that cannot be resisted, are the problems concerned with the rebuilding of human society as a city of God. Everywhere we are face to face with the backward and brutal conditions of labor, the need for a minimum wage as a first charge on industry; the relations of men, and women, and children in the home, in economics, and in the state; the fatal elements in the fundamental structure of civil society. There is a deep and growing sense of injustice in the millions of European toilers. It is there even when men are only dimly conscious of it, and it begets unrest and impatience and anxiety in the mass of them, spasms of rebellion in many, and persistent anarchy in a few. It is an alarming portent, and the churches of Christ, according to their Creator's will, are charged to deal with it—"to preach good news to the poor," to study the real causes of their sufferings, and to inspire continuous toil to remove their wrongs; nor can they be faithful to him, or to their accepted trust, or to the millions of their brothers and sisters if they ignore the real facts of our social life, or are content to heal the wounds of the commonwealth slightly. History and experience are telling us that nothing completely succeeds in these matters except the Christianity of Christ Jesus, and that society will never be right till it is really Christian from top to bottom and all the way through.

This means for the individual, not preparation for the world to come as an end in itself, not the attainment of self-perfection as an end in itself, but fruitfulness in actual human relations. This is

the twentieth-century ideal and the Christian ideal of complete living. And the message of the church to modern life is the translation of this ideal into terms of the gospel of Christ.

PRAYER

Almighty God: Grant that we may always, and most of all, desire the coming of thy blessed Kingdom on earth. Make each of us able to see how we may, where we stand and work, serve thee in this great purpose of thine. Take from us anger and greed and indolence and every selfish impulse. Heal our blindness and recall us from indifference. May no sacrifice that we can actually make and no service that we can actually perform find us unwilling. Make us good citizens of thy Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

XV

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

BY

GERALD BIRNEY SMITH

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

But according to the promise we look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Pet. 3:13).

The chapter from which this text is taken opens a glimpse into a world of religious thought so strange that it is difficult for us rightly to appreciate the emotions and purposes which clothed themselves in that ancient millenarian garb. Impressed as we are today with the consciousness of the infinite resources of the world in which we live, such a message of longing for the catastrophe when all that is now visible to us shall "be dissolved with fervent heat" seems like a curious misreading of divine providence. Nevertheless those who best know the early days of Christianity recognize in this very longing one of the strong motives which originally made for persistent courage and trust. Primitive Christian faith was founded in part upon a confident belief in the speedy advent of the day of judgment, when the wicked opponents of the Lord should be destroyed and the loyal followers of Jesus should be rescued from the scorn and persecution which they had endured and should enter upon their conspicuous triumph in the new kingdom of righteousness. So long as this hope of deliverance was kept clear and strong, the trials and tragedies of the present could be endured with fortitude.

But when the Epistle from which our text comes was written, there was a more or less widespread skepticism arising on this very point. Men who had been trying to be brave and patient, listening day after day to the exhortations of hope, looking every morning for the signs of the coming of the Lord, and praying every night for the speedy consummation of their desires, were beginning to become restive. Voices were heard challenging the Christian message, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For from the day when the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." Instead of the cosmic revolution upon which their hopes depended, Christians beheld the unvarying monotony of the customary processes of nature. Was there, then, any reason to hope that the days to come would be any different from those which were past? Was not the uniformity of nature giving the lie to a faith based upon miracle? Was there really any ground to expect that the Roman power would be overthrown? Was there any prospect that the misery due to oppression and misgovernment would be brought to an end by a glorious advent of the Lord? Was not the Christian hope vain? Would it not be better to abandon this exalted vision of a new heaven and a new earth, and frankly to face the task of making the most out of present conditions? So men were reasoning.

The issue is thus squarely drawn. Put in more general terms it is the question whether life is more

truly interpreted by the vision of a blessedness which is yet to be realized; or whether we should recognize frankly that humanity is not likely to transcend the accomplishments which seem to have been regulated by the law of uniformity. Shall we look for a new heaven and a new earth? Or shall we settle down to the prosaic task of conformity to the very unsatisfactory world which we have?

The answer which the author of this Epistle makes to this query is prompt and plain. Not for a moment does he contemplate the possibility of a Christianity which shall have lost its vision. He hastens to reassure the faint hearts. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise." God is delaying only in order that a larger number may have opportunity to repent and to gain the certainty of belonging to that blessed community which shall welcome the coming of the Lord. Moreover, with that happy faculty for translating issues into terms of infinity which is the refuge of so many makers of theodicies, the writer urges the readers to remember that however long the time may seem to them, it is not long to God who dwells from everlasting to everlasting. What is a thousand years in the sight of God? It is but as a day to us. Let us not measure the divine plans by our own impatience. Let us be confident that in his own good time the Lord will fulfil his promise. *Therefore* Christians ought not to be faint-hearted, but to be ever zealous in good works in

order to be heirs of the kingdom when it comes. For "according to the promise we look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

It is somewhat difficult today to do justice to this type of Christian preaching. To us it seems so evident that the millennial hope was a delusion that we are prone to leap to the conclusion that a faith which rested upon it must have been unwholesome. The word "other-worldly" which we commonly employ to characterize this kind of religion has for us an undesirable sound. We are tempted to look upon the other-worldliness of millenarians as a refined sort of selfishness, a deliberate attempt to lay up treasures in heaven at the expense of the earthly treasures of culture and civilization. But we must not identify this early Christian hope with the ascetic individualism of later ages. The kingdom hope of the early church was inherited from Israel. It took shape in response to that intense patriotism which was at the heart of the religion of the Hebrews. For the child of Israel religion always meant patriotism. The utterances of the Old Testament are almost never purely individualistic. The religious Hebrew thought of his own fate as bound up with the fate of the nation. Salvation must come in terms of national deliverance. So confirmed a trait of thought was this that, even in the days of national disaster, the Jew could not be content with a purely personal religion. He must look forward

to a future time when the righteous community, of which he was to be a member, should enjoy the favor of God. Out of God's heaven would come at some time the power to restore the kingdom to Israel.

The establishment of the kingdom, however, seemed to many ardent souls to be a task beyond the capacity of man to accomplish. The faithful must await the advent of the heaven-sent prince, who with miraculous power could achieve the seemingly impossible. Thus cosmic catastrophe was expected to reveal a might greater than that of the Roman emperor. This earth which he so confidently ruled was to be utterly destroyed, together with all the works of iniquity. A new earth was to furnish a proper home for the righteous community. Miraculous as was the manner of its coming, in its essence it was to be a kingdom of love and mutual service. Tyranny and oppression were to vanish; for all men were to live together as brothers. Sickness and sorrow were to be driven out; for where there is no sin there will be no suffering due to sin. The former things were to vanish away, and only love and purity and holy joy were to be found. With all its miraculous and transcendent elements, the kingdom was to be a *new social community on earth.*

The early Christians inherited this religious patriotism. They, too, thought of the consummation of the kingdom as the establishment of a righteous society. Indeed, for early faith, death was esteemed

a misfortune; for the original disciples expected to see in their own lifetime the advent of the kingdom. It was only as they were assured of the resurrection of the saints to share in the coming social order that they were comforted. So the author of this Epistle from which our text is taken does not promise men a mystical transportation to a heaven of self-satisfied bliss. He promises a new heaven and a *new earth*, wherein dwelleth righteousness. *Therefore* he urges the Christians to be faithful in the pursuit of that righteousness which will fit them to be worthy members of the kingdom of righteousness when it comes. The patriotic religious ideals of the loyal Jews were by the Christians transferred to the future city of God in which they felt that their citizenship was secure. If we lose sight of this social and patriotic element in the early Christian faith we omit an essential portion of the kingdom hope.

But the expected miracle did not occur. So far as outward events were concerned, the scoffers were right. Even down to this twentieth century after Christ "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." The apologetic argument of the author of this Epistle has lost its force for most of us. To be sure, there are always those who have the detachment of mind necessary to ignore the tremendous weight of the teachings of science, and who in good conscience can still pray for the speedy coming of the great final catastrophe. But the

number of such is small. Few of us really expect the end of this world within the lifetime of our generation. More and more are we becoming accustomed to the thought of a future extending over millions of years during which man will be compelled to live on this planet with no resources save those which are already here. It is easy for one to draw the conclusion that because the kingdom hope of the early church has proved delusive, therefore the Christian faith itself is not to be trusted. It cannot be denied that the abandonment of the appeal to the supernatural brings a strong pressure to abandon any attempt to guide and inspire life by a vision located in the future. Is it not better to turn from the ecstasy of the prophet or from the dreams of the mystic to the plain facts which are to be read in the past? Shall we not do better to regard man as the product of well-known forces rather than as the expectant heir of an unseen future?

Now the remarkable fact which confronts us as we look at the history of our religion is the persistence with which Christian faith has insisted upon the better future as the source of its hope and courage. While the note of this Second Epistle of Peter was frequently sounded in the later ages, the main streams of Christian faith and activity were diverted into other channels. The vision of a righteous kingdom was radically changed in form and in content; but the expectation of a future triumph of God over the enemies of righteousness was too precious

to be abandoned. Sometimes, indeed, it found expression in an individualistic mysticism. Sometimes it was interpreted in terms of an aristocratic ideal of esoteric philosophy. Sometimes it took the form of a grim joy in conserving the structure of primitive faith against the attacks of pagans or "enlightened" Christians. But in one way or another Christianity has preserved its emphasis on the transforming power of a confident expectation that God's reign will be established. Not as mere products of the past, but as heirs of a glorious future are men to live and aspire.

It was this faith in God's future which inspired the wonderful achievements of the mediaeval church. The early Christians had, it is true, found themselves compelled to await a miracle from heaven to break the power of Rome. But in the year 410 an event occurred which seemed to the imagination of holy men sufficient evidence that the miracle had taken place. Alaric, the Goth, at the head of an army of barbarians, entered the imperial city of Rome and spoiled it at his will. It was the visible sign of the invisible destruction of the power of the Caesars. That mighty empire which had buttressed itself with untold wealth and power, which seemed as nearly immortal as any earthly institution could be, had been forced to bow in the dust. This seemed the end of an era. To whom should men turn in their distress? Who could protect them from the horrors of anarchy?

Where should be found the forces of law and order? We know how nobly the Roman bishops responded to this cry of need, how the church gradually found itself compelled to take the place of the empire and to administer justice. To Augustine this was evidence that the long-expected millennium had come. The church, divinely instituted and divinely commissioned, was the city of God from heaven which was to organize the new earth, in which only Christian principles should be allowed to prevail. The dream of Hildebrand was but the serious attempt to put into effect this religious faith. He believed that through the authority of the church the new earth could be created in which should dwell only that righteousness in which the Catholic church believed. Earthly kings and potentates were to bow before the word of the Lord spoken through his viceregent on earth. Commerce and industry were to take from the church the rules under which they should be allowed to flourish. From birth to death the individual was to rely upon the church for blessing and for direction. There was to be one faith, one morality, one political power. And all was to be ordained of God. The learning of the ancients was to serve the interests of Christian theology. The politics of the Roman empire were to be consecrated to the service of the church. The rituals and myths of paganism were to be transformed into channels of instruction and inspiration for the Christian life. Thus did the men of the

Middle Ages live in the confident belief in the sovereignty of God on earth. Civilization was to be completely Christianized. Guided by the church, men were to be freed from sin, taught to think correctly, led into paths of righteousness by the precepts of Christianity, and made to feel that the only true significance of the present earth is to furnish a place for the triumph of the church.

Nor was this interpretation of the kingdom hope confined to Catholicism. Did not Calvin in Geneva attempt precisely the same program on a smaller scale? Did he not hold that we may draw from the Bible divine direction for a righteous state? Did not Cromwell believe himself commissioned to establish a state in which should dwell the righteousness of God? Did not our Puritan fathers attempt to construct in America a theocracy from which all wickedness should be banished by divine authority? All these splendid achievements of the Christianity of the past were based upon the belief that God had made available from heaven the forces by which a new earth could be created, in which should dwell righteousness. How much we owe to this noble aspiration of the church it is hard to estimate. Changed in form, indeed, but none the less confident in tone, the kingdom hope kept Christians from discouragement and indifference through the long ages in which our modern world was taking shape.

But today this mediaeval form of the hope is losing its cogency. The dream of Hildebrand is

reduced to the pitiful fiction maintained by an old man who proclaims himself a prisoner in the Vatican. Where are now the "blue laws" by which Calvinism hoped to constitute a genuine Christian state? Many of them are on our statute books still, but they stand simply as survivals of an abandoned ideal. It is true that our consciences still feel the power of this mediaeval ideal. We are reluctant frankly to repeal the puritan statutes from our statute books. Nevertheless few men have any confident hope that these regulations will really be revived. And as the dissolution of the mediaeval dream progresses, there is a growing skepticism concerning the practicability of a Christianity which has, it would seem, so conspicuously failed to organize a church-state. The man who hopes to see the puritan régime restored, or the Bible made supreme in the public schools, or secular amusements abolished, must indeed be discouraged as he follows the course of events. Where, indeed, is the vision of the fathers? Are we not repeating the history of Babylon of old or of Rome with her pagan pomp? Are not all things as they have been since the beginning of creation? Is it not true, as more than one vehement voice in our day has said, that Christianity has had its chance, and has conspicuously failed? Is there the slightest reason to expect that through Christianity a new heaven and a new earth will appear in which righteousness shall prevail? Where, indeed, are we to look for our deliverance if the

hopes of the early disciples and the hopes of the mediaeval church have alike proved false?

To a similar question asked of him by the Pharisees, Jesus once replied, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo, here! or there! for lo, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

The new heavens are here. While the Catholic church, secure in its consciousness of present power, was frankly laying plans to increase and to maintain its spiritual and temporal dominion, a quiet scholar was unobtrusively at work in the city of Rome. After long reflection on the movements of the heavenly bodies, he came to the conclusion that the commonly accepted view of the relation between the earth and the heavens was incorrect. For centuries men had looked up to the stars, believing that behind them in some mysterious fashion resided miraculous beings and powers which might intervene to change the course of history. Copernicus made this belief forever impossible by his theory that the earth itself is only one of myriad heavenly bodies.

This revolutionary doctrine at first brought consternation to the minds of religious men. Copernicus seemed to have abolished the heavenly host with all their powers. If it be true that the earth is one of the heavenly bodies, then we have nothing more to hope from the heavens than from the earth. Revelation, miracle, apocalypse, divine deliverance, all seemed impossible if the new astronomy

were true. To this very day the consciousness of the church reflects this tremendous sense of loss. Ecclesiastical decrees and theological denunciation were hurled at the new scientists, in the hope of silencing those who were overthrowing confidence in the gospel of a miraculous deliverance. But little by little the new astronomy has conquered. The consequences have not yet been consistently felt by the religious consciousness. In our prayers and in our theology we still do our thinking largely in terms of the Ptolemaic world-picture. Slowly, however, we are coming to see that we cannot longer regard the heavens as a far-away realm of magic out of which may come unexpected catastrophes. There are no resources in the heavens which are not already available on earth.

But the negative side of this discovery of the new heavens is only half of the story. If it be true that we may no longer hope for the establishment of righteousness by a cosmic catastrophe or by a divinely commissioned political church, it is none the less true that out of the new heavens we have been seeing a new earth develop. Slowly but surely the same method of inquiry which resulted in the establishment of the new heavens is creating a new earth. Scientific investigation is making antiquated the maxims of our forefathers by revealing astonishing resources in the earth. Who can contemplate the majestic speed of a limited express train today without a sense of awe that such marvels

should be within our control? We do not have to wait passively for miracles to occur, but are instead free to command marvels to serve us. Coal and steam are now performing tasks beside which the petty miracles of the saints are like child's play. Medical science is saving the lives of thousands whom the prayers and rites of mediaeval faith could not heal. The advertisements of the luxurious trains between Chicago and New York are full of marvels quite as extraordinary as those depicted in the messianic kingdom of the Books of Enoch. The vision of Pasteur banishes sickness and pain no less confidently than the vision of the Revelator. The splendors and luxuries of modern cities are quite as striking as the glories of the celestial city of apocalypse. The new earth is appearing. We have caught a glimpse of its possibilities. But it doth not yet appear what it shall be. We are actually dwelling in a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth—what? What share has Christianity in the creation of this marvelous world of modern civilization? Dare we say that in it shall dwell righteousness? Or have we been so absorbed in regretting the loss of our previous visions that we have not awakened to the fact that this new world of ours is being built up by the very science which religious faith has too often despised and reviled? It is imperative that we should awaken and insist upon our rightful place in the constructive forces of our day. Shall we abandon the splendid forward vision

of the Christians of all the ages? Shall we exhaust our powers in trying to reinstate an impossible past instead of gladly following the leading of Providence into this new and larger world? God has brought to us the new heavens and the new earth. Do we care enough about righteousness to enter into the inheritance and claim it in the name of God?

There is one significant difference between the world in which we live and that in which the apocalyptic visions were born. Then there was no such a thing as local government. From the great far-away imperial throne emanated the authority to control political and social conditions. And this imperial power was pagan, caring nothing for the dearest ideals of Jew or Christian. What wonder that men invoked the intervention of God to set them free from foreign dominion? But today we live in an age when we have the right to make our own government what we choose. No Roman Caesar dominates our political life. Our national constitution begins with the simple but eloquent announcement of the fact that "we, the people," are enacting the form of government under which we shall live. If we do not have a kingdom of righteousness it is our own fault. We actually get as good a government as we really deserve. If corruption and inefficiency persist, if vice stalks the streets of our city, if oppression and injustice walk unrebuked in industrial life, it is simply because we are not willing to pay the price for the removal of these ills.

If we Christians are content to live surrounded by the tokens of unrighteousness when we have the power to remove them, is there any use in praying for a celestial kingdom? In the democratic opportunity to create a new righteousness, God has given to us the fulfilment of the dream of those early Christians who longed for a social order in which they might exercise the full rights of citizenship. But the glory of the dream will fade if we are content with any lesser ideals than those which inspired the early faith.

If, then, we are worthy followers of the early Christians, if we are to deserve fellowship in that goodly company, we, like them, must ardently desire the rule of God in our social life. We must devote to the study of the new earth which we possess as much earnestness as they did to the study of the unseen kingdom which they expected would be revealed from heaven. We must seek in our business, our family life, our social enterprises the rulership of God, even as they dreamed of a world in which God should be supreme.

Here, too, we find a prophetic word spoken by Jesus to the disciples when they approached him with the request to make them supreme in the coming order. The great ones in the kingdom are not to lord it over others, but are to minister to the needy. Even the great cosmic catastrophe could not usher in the kingdom if that note of ministry were wanting. The king himself came not to be

ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. From the transformed spirits of the citizens shall come the transformation of the kingdom. Through the men who have in their hearts the love of God is to come the ideal of loyalty to God in all the details of life.

The kingdom today is coming largely without observation. Through the quiet efforts of those who have the spirit of ministry the new righteousness is appearing. Instances of this are all about us. When, a few years ago, Judge Lindsay in Denver conceived his duty to be, not to defend the majesty of abstract law, but to minister through his administration of the law to the needs of wayward boys, he put into effect the fundamental law of the kingdom. A few months ago I was talking with the judge in his chambers in Denver, when a boy came in to get his sentence to the Reform School. Out of the court he went with no policeman or guard, with simple instructions how to take the train for the school. Into the boy's heart had been instilled the idea of a "square deal." The righteousness was located within his purpose instead of in the strong arm of a policeman. Boys go from that courthouse to the educational influences of the Reform School carrying with them something of the spirit of honor which is indispensable in the new earth wherein is to dwell righteousness. Through the spirit of ministry this transformation has been accomplished.

And what is true of the boys is no less true of men who have gone wrong. It has taken the world a long time to learn that brute force can never create righteousness. Barred windows in a jail and idle hours devoted to desperate meditations will never sweeten the bitter spirits of men. The world of crime will be transformed into a world of righteousness only as the spirit of ministry shall rule in our courts and houses of detention and correction. Some of us will live to see the day when the nation which preserves a "jail" will be frankly judged defective in its discernment of righteousness. Instead of the older ideal of degrading punishment there is rapidly growing the conviction that there is no more pressing duty than to put those who have sinned in the care of men and women in whom the spirit of ministry is all-compelling.

More than this. We are going to insist that the very industries which are the glory of our land shall be transformed by instilling into them the spirit of ministry. One of our great railroads recently advertised the advantages of one of its fast trains from Chicago to New York with the striking invitation, "Be a guest on the Pennsylvania Special." Who could resist that lure? To have all the intelligence and skill which goes into the making and management of so magnificent a means of transportation put at the service of the "guests"—is that not the very essence of ministry? Suppose the spirit of that advertisement were to be adopted by

every Christian business man. Suppose that the thousands of such men who are in the offices in our great cities were to say to everyone who crossed the threshold, "Be my guest in the transaction of this business." Would not the sky-scrapers then be the cathedrals of the kingdom? We all know the spirit of helpfulness which confides to a friend the truth concerning some contemplated investment. Will not the genuine Christian man tell the truth to all clients? If this were done, how quickly would those evils disappear against which the prophet Amos thundered! The factory-owner watches over a son or a friend in the works in the spirit of helpfulness. If conditions were such that ill-health or maiming in his case were probable, how quickly would safeguards be provided! The spirit of ministry would not endure the presence of such wrongs. Christians believe that the time is speedily coming when men will see the splendid opportunity here for ministry to the thousands in their employ.

Or again, the spirit of ministry leads a father to provide wholesome amusements for his boys and girls. But in our great cities what poisons grow unsuspected among the flowers of amusement provided by those who have no sense of the privilege of ministry! Why should we leave the entertainment of our youth to be provided by those who think only of financial return, and who never count the cost of ruined lives? The spirit of ministry is already at work in providing playgrounds and

small parks for the physical and moral salvation of our youth. But how pitifully small are the movements of righteousness compared with the mighty hosts of evil! Surely some of us will live to see the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness among the growing boys and girls in their hours of play.

Such are some of the ways in which modern faith looks to the future. The form of the early millennial hope has passed away. But the hope itself can never die so long as Christianity remains alive. For the past century or so men have been puzzled because they have seen the old forms vanishing, and they have not seen what is to take the place of the old. But the day of perplexity is passing. We are now seeing how the new heavens and the new earth are to come. We can now praise God for the vision which he has granted to us of the coming kingdom where the spirit of ministry in the name of Christ shall transform the old earth with its war and injustice and class-hatred and selfish luxury and narrow greed into the new earth in which shall dwell the righteousness of God. Far more precious are treasures which we are allowed to discover than those which are provided without our co-operation. Far better will be the kingdom of righteousness in the making of which we may have a share than would be a heavenly Jerusalem let down from the skies. The ancient vision is changed in form; but its content is no less precious. In the strength of this confident faith in the future king-

dom, Christians can endure patiently, knowing that the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but that out of the activities of his Spirit in the hearts of men will be created the new earth in which dwelleth righteousness.

PRAYER

O thou great Ruler of the destinies of men: Establish our hearts in the confidence which thou dost grant to those who believe that thy kingdom shall come. We thank thee for the splendid vision of thy servants of old, who amid injustice and oppression steadfastly proclaimed the gospel of divine deliverance, and who through their courage and devotion kept men from faltering in the paths of righteousness. We praise thee for the holy ambition of those who have sought to make the kingdoms of the world the kingdom of our Lord. Thou hast called us into a noble inheritance of heroic faith. Through the words and deeds of the prophets and ministers of thy better future thou hast lifted our aspirations and hast bidden us expect large things from thee. Grant, we beseech thee, that we may not be disobedient to the heavenly vision. As thou hast put into our hands the power which comes from knowledge and from wealth, wilt thou put it into our hearts to find our place among those whom thy Spirit has led to leave the profit of the present for the sake of the treasures of thy kingdom. Make us to rejoice in the opportunities which thou hast set before this generation to engage in ministry in the

name of Christ. Keep us from the carelessness or the greed which thou must condemn. Open our eyes to the glory of service in communion with him who has redeemed us from the evil life. In the innocent joy of little children, in the pure aspirations of young men and women, in the love and devotion of parents, in the honor and integrity of those in public position, in the yearning for larger ministry in the hearts of men of affairs, in the patient toil and boundless sympathy of those who are cleansing the dark places of human life, in the insistent hope which lures us toward thy better future, may we see the evidences of thy Spirit, and may we yield our lives to thy call. So may we daily pray that thy kingdom may come and thy will be done in earth, as in heaven. AMEN.

XVI

THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

BY

FRED MERRIFIELD

THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The everlasting God . . . . giveth power (Isa. 40:28,29).

He hath anointed me to preach good tidings (Luke 4:18).

When a man has found God in the hitherto unknown depths of his own life, there usually comes with this startling experience a double revelation: first, of the appalling moral needs of himself and of his brother-men; and, secondly, of the tremendous power of God to transform human weakness into increasing nobility of character. From the keen appreciation of these two supreme facts issues a vital message which no man may, with impunity, forget or neglect. And there is no joy, in this life or in the greater life beyond, equal to that which comes to one who dedicates his full powers to the proclamation of this divine message.

The great, unknown author of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah has evidently passed through some such experience. Everything, seemingly, that was dear to the people of Israel had been torn from their lives—sacred temple, holy city, and beloved country; even God was gone, never to return! But in that crucial hour—the hour when, most of all, men fight for the realities of faith—God spoke quietly from within the heart of at least one desperate exile. He arose in the strength of his new conviction and

fired the souls of his fellow-exiles, crying out with his whole might, "Behold, your God!" Here was a veritable resurrection. God had given power to the faint. Could anything henceforth be impossible?

Many years afterward a quiet youth of Nazareth had almost this identical experience. He had meditated from his earliest years upon the victories and the tragedies of his people. Shame and sorrow, longing and passion, had alternately swept over his devoted spirit; for he loved his Jewish people with an intensity like God's own changeless love. Then, one momentous day, all the influences which had thus far molded his life brought him face to face with a supreme decision. He knew God was opening the gates of new life to him—but at how great cost! Dared he enter? All the natural timidity of his nature and all the peace of the carpenter's career bade him say no. But his stern sense of duty, his love of struggle, and his brotherly interest in men drove him finally to complete acceptance of the divine will. His message, therefore, was one of mingled joy and sadness: joy, because he was to help God win back human lives; sadness, because he must phrase his message in ways which might be misunderstood or even quite displeasing to the synagogue leaders of the time.

I like to think, however, that Jesus was a man of joy more than a man of sorrows. Even in those extreme moments of weariness and danger, when the shadow of an awful fate pressed upon his soul,

he invariably fought his way back to the calm of a great victory. His message became increasingly urgent, and he spoke with ever-deeper appreciation of truth as dangers multiplied around him. The marks of God were upon his pure face. Like the prophets before him, he spoke with burning earnestness and with a dignity which compelled even his enemies to listen, awe-struck.

What shall we say of the bearers of God's message in our own day—this first generation of the boasted twentieth century? As far as Christian workers are concerned, are they close to human need and afire with the sense of God and his transforming power? And yet our message has grown more and more meaningful with the ripening of the ages. In this most strenuous period, with its exceedingly varied and complex types of life, when the tests of character seem fiercer and so very pitiless, are we guarding the sources of our human compassion? Are we more than ever sure that God cares for our highest welfare? There never was an age when men were capable of so much development, when they so needed power for endless achievements. Sometimes we fairly gasp at the thought of the infinite possibilities which time and eternity may reveal in the realm of human character! Are we, like the Master Jesus, able to stand out before the whole world and say out of a living experience, "Here is the message which fits the need of every life. Good tidings: behold, your God"? Do men

respect the dignity of our mission and heed our message with eagerness today?

God knows there are many noble and efficient Christian workers in our modern world. The Spirit of Jesus is beautifully exemplified in them—the spirit of love and good cheer, and insistent progress. And yet we Christians are facing a tremendous crisis, as every thoughtful person knows all too well. As far as our leading organization is concerned—I refer to the church, which is supposed to be the embodiment of all that is noble in our faith—we stand in the presence of a strangely embarrassing situation. In spite of all our claims as to the possession of authority, truth, and power, we seem in general to be losing our hold upon the communities which we mean to lead in ways of righteousness. Leave out of consideration the many unintelligent people who unfairly judge the views and activities of the church. Yet we are compelled to face the fact that thousands of honest and upright people are, to put it mildly, disappointed in the church. They think we represent a travesty upon religion; we are not practical in our conduct of church interests; we have lost ourselves in the monotonous round of ceremonial; our worship is too often perfunctory, and ineffective with both God and men. Many feel that, thanks to our petty interpretations, God is lost again, prayer is impossible, and there is no reliable guide to life. Shall we loftily rebuke these "enemies of the church" for their rejection

of our long-standing claims; or shall we preserve our dignity in a nobler and more manly way by asking fearlessly for all the facts in the case, with a vow to act only and altogether as God, through experience, shall give us light? As surely as we continue to plod blindly on, regardless of the criticisms called forth by our pretentious attitude, the church is doomed to oblivion in the graveyard of "dead religions" whose number no man can count. No warning could be stronger, if we have eyes to see the judgments of history!

The salvation of Christianity—not to speak of the church—in the even more strenuous years to come, lies in the frank and fearless acceptance of that great principle stated in the Fourth Gospel, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." By standing boldly out before the world, asking no favors at the hands of any man; but always resting our convictions upon the tests of experience, and then throwing our whole selves into the presentation of the truth thus gained, we can win back the masses of protesting people who now find no comfort or help in our midst. Great numbers of them are really hungry for the message we may make clear through our lives. Let me suggest a few ways in which we may work out this more effective message and lay it, with convincing power, before our fellow-men.

First of all, we may exhibit more honesty in facing facts in religion. Nothing in the world so

appeals to real men and women of all nationalities as downright fairness in the formation of our judgments. And nowhere should there be more insistence upon absolute open-mindedness and honesty than in the consideration of religious matters. It is the height of folly, and a sad comment upon the worth of one's convictions, for a Christian to refuse to entertain evidence from any reasonable source. Why should we, for instance, take refuge in theories of inspiration which will not for a moment stand in the light of facts so well known today? Why insist that because God is all-powerful, therefore he must have done all the marvels which men so reverently, but in ignorance, have attributed to him? Even a fair amount of study on the part of the average individual, not to say more of our ministers, would lead to saner views as to the origin of the Bible and the historicity of the wonder-stories therein recorded. Why then do we Christians—parents, Bible teachers, and preachers alike—not take the trouble to know the truth as it may be known? We may be absolutely certain of one thing: the gold of God's truth cannot but come to us in purer form if it first pass through the searching fires of an honest and reverent criticism.

God puts no premium upon ignorance or fond credulity. We do not honor him when we base our conclusions upon theories whose origin we have never sought out. A message of such power and dignity as ours calls for testing, for ceaseless inves-

tigation. After all, Christianity is no set creed formulated by Jesus or by his disciples. Christianity is a life, to be lived in the free and growing spirit of Jesus. Life must change to be healthy. And so our message must ever take on new forms, adapting itself to new situations, being sifted of all possible error, kept pure and vital that it may continue to transform men and women into the likeness of the heavenly Father. It is astonishing and inspiring to see how, under such severe scrutiny, the fundamental views of Jesus take on large significance. We gain, by such honest research, a new and livelier faith in him and his power to interpret man and God. The secret of Jesus' power with God and men lies chiefly in the fact that he made sincerity the keynote of his life. If he, whom we delight to call our Leader, fought his way insistently toward truth, shall we allow the dogmatic assertions of very inferior characters, however ancient and popular, to limit our freedom of thought? The creed that will not grow must cease to represent truth. The church will continue to lose power with men just so long as it clings feverishly to the outworn statements of life-experience. We shall surely dignify our message when we dare to test it in the increasing light of modern thought. When the church gets, once again, the open-mindedness of its Master, the world will hear the message for which it most certainly is hungry. If we Christians do our

part to make religion reasonable, vital, and practical, there is no normal man or woman living who can fail to respect and be helped by our hearty convictions.

Again, we must have larger faith in humanity. There has been so much unnecessary and undignified quibbling in Christian circles, in years past, over the question of "lost souls." At times, in our semi-omniscience we have almost dared to "bind" the eternal destinies of others both upon earth and in heaven, delivering men over to the inevitable fate of the damned when, behold, God was not yet through with his appeals to these lives at all! In our haste, we have too often hesitated, or refused, to believe that there was hope for this hardened man or for that forsaken woman. We would better remember our Master's kindly advice, "Judge not!" Are we not learning how patient and hopeful the Infinite is? Has he not besieged human beings long before we have awakened to their need? Does he not stay by long after we have given up hope, believing in the possible redemption of men and women who seemingly have no power of response left in them? Why have we thought God hasty, like a petty sovereign, to avenge his claims? Why should he, more quickly than the best of us, give up the fight for lives that have eternal powers wrapped up within them?

It were far better to err on the other side, if error there be in a love that will not die. It is

certainly human so to love, for we cannot give up those we love, in time or in eternity. Why should God? If we, with great tactfulness, present our message straight to the better natures of men, we shall certainly win many more of them than we do now. If we let them know we cannot give them up to their passions or their prejudices they will begin to have faith in themselves; and that is the beginning of faith in God. There never in history has been a day when men more needed God and his hosts of devoted co-workers to believe in them. The tests of life seem to grow more and more severe as time wears on. Thousands of suicides might be prevented if those unfortunates *knew somebody cared* and still believed in them. Thousands of unhappy people hate the church today because it has too often taught of a "narrow way" to life and God that meant, not moral earnestness and the jealousy of holy love, but the pettiness of an artificial scheme of salvation, an aristocratic heaven, and an eternity of smug selfishness. As surely as God reverses fates, the last shall be first; the haters will "enter the Kingdom" before the superior and tardy saints! Let us take warning.

We read Harold Begbie's *Twice-born Men;* then, plucking up our courage, we undertake our fitful tasks of saving men from extreme moral dangers. But how blind are we to the signs of all the ages! If this old universe holds a God at all,

he too must be struggling, and that without ceasing, for the lives of his people.

> How can I give thee up, O Ephraim!
> For God am I, and not man!

We have been so bound by the age-long traditions of men we have not had eyes to see that God is in the midst of battle, his face all aglow with courage and certain victory! Why cannot we take the call of our own best human love as his call, let other men's theologies be what they must? Multitudes of our choicest young men and women are actually losing faith in themselves and their power to be religious because we Christians have coldly condemned them for not coming to God in our accustomed ways. These many tempted people, with all they mean for influence in coming years, we may save—by faith in them. We are never in danger of outrunning the faith of the tireless God!

Another element in the effectiveness of our message must be our presentation of the tremendous reality and nearness of God. Christians of the twentieth century, if they have at all caught the spirit of their Master, center their message in the love and power of God. Nothing must be allowed to obscure the fact of an ever-present God working in love to bring about the perfection of life among his children of earth. Jesus set his whole life to the supreme task of knowing God and making him known. Through years of determined search for

the divine will, he came to the place where he could say to his people with convincing assurance: "God lives, and God cares for every human need." Multitudes of people have no use for Christianity today because so comparatively few of us have cultivated the sense and conviction of God. I say cultivated, because the religious sense has to be nurtured just as truly as does the taste for art or for science. It would mean nothing to us if God were to force himself upon our attention. We have to achieve this greatest of all the discoveries of life for ourselves before we can appreciate it adequately.

Can a man, then, really know that God lives and cares? Our reason and our deepest emotions certainly point strongly in this direction. The full and final assurance of these tremendous facts is won by the open tests of earnest living. We have been weak in our presentation of this greatest of all subjects. We have been insisting that people must believe in God because of the experiences of others —the Bible writers and Jesus, especially. Their experiences are, to be sure, extremely inspiring, reassuring. But no man can live for another. We have failed to court the investigation of the whole universe of facts and experiences lying more closely at hand. We have expected the emotions to be aroused by suggestion and inspiration from without; whereas truth can dawn completely upon a man only when he himself has plunged into the quest for God and has, for himself and in himself,

primarily, come to know God as real and tremendously interested in every man's life. We shall dignify our message a thousand fold if we can make men feel that God can be revealed to them only when he is sought after with the entire, prepared life of the seeker. When we teach men that they must think their way Godward, that they must live their way into the sacred consciousness of the Infinite Father, and that then, and then only, will they most fully feel him in the depths of their inner being, we shall succeed in making the quest worthy and provocative of the most heroic and reverent efforts of which humanity is capable. Such persistent, intelligent search cannot but find a heart of love throbbing within the universe.

> Ye shall seek me, and find me,
> When ye shall search for me with all your heart.

The dignifying of the Christian message waits also for more adequate, active expression of our deepening life. Too often have we professing followers of Jesus contented ourselves with the punctilious observance of ceremonies whose origin and significance we really have never investigated. All too often have we regarded firm adherence to traditional doctrines as the essence of Christianity. But Jesus' spirit of insistent protest against lifeless formality and static doctrines is again at work in these days. The old wine-skins of custom cannot stand the pressure of the divine life which seeks larger expression; and where men and organizations

are not wise enough to provide for more efficient, inspiring methods of work, the power of a nobler life is often lost altogether.

Attendance upon services of worship and preaching may at times have been the proof of thorough piety. Some people still stand aghast at the thought that younger people must have more activities than these in connection with the church, or else find them in outside organizations. Yet every generation brings its new problems, in religion as in the various industries and in education. How we laugh at the rural Japanese carpenter who persists, even today, in sawing his logs by hand, or at the farmer who threshes his grain with the old-fashioned flail! Yet nothing in the world is ridiculed more than religion, just because we cling to worn-out methods of thought and useless and inadequate forms of service. We may content ourselves in reply, with the hurling of holy anathemas at the heads of these impious folk, but they are stating a fact that we cannot conceal even from rather dim eyes. An increasing procession of "unbelievers" in our methods and doctrines continues to pour past, and even out from, our church doors toward larger freedom and more satisfying life. We cannot, as Christians, avoid our clear responsibility. If our message is, as we believe, fundamentally adequate for all men at all times, we must and can win those estranged classes back to the life which God has meant them to enjoy.

Many of our modern churches are succeeding nobly in this great task, and numerous organizations allied to the church are making steady progress toward the desired end. Quietly, but effectively, the whole organism of religious life and thought is being transformed to meet actual modern needs and to give expression to the new visions of duty which are growing out of the pressing moral, economic, and educational problems of the day. If religion can stand for practical work and enlightened methods of work, in keeping with all other lines of advance, men will again respect the church and hasten to volunteer help in tasks worthy of a man, in "something worth while."

Life is too petty without God; too dull without worship of all that is good and holy. The restless hunger for God is a part of our deepest human nature; we cannot forget it always; it will not be displaced, for it is God's own voice to lead us home to himself. If the church, then, working hopefully with these clear facts in mind, can quicken the lives of men with the consciousness of constant co-operation with God—so that they will feel that every breath they draw is a prayer for strength, and every act a sacrament—they will soon come to realize the power of an endless life, from which nothing henceforth can ever tempt them away.

Creeds, as has been said, have their place in religion: they are waymarks pointing to victory

over lower ideals, the declaration of the ever-restless divine spirit of man for larger independence and life. Creeds are, whenever they are honest and open, necessarily iconoclastic; they must shatter contemporaneous idols, and they must likewise expect to be broken when their own time is served. There never yet has been a creed in Christianity suited to all men of all times; there probably never will be such an anomaly unless all Christians refuse to grow. The spirit of Jesus forbids that; it must ever expand and find new modes of expressing its growing powers. A Christian who cannot grow has surely caught little of the Master's spirit of progress. He, himself, had to break away from the useless forms of his church; he could not afford to be bound by anything that did not represent life and advancement. To him religion meant opening the whole emotional self to the play of human need, and divine longing; it meant thinking one's own way forward in all earnestness and sincerity, scorning sham and mastering truth; it meant also that one's will must be set forever toward God as he could be found in the crying distress of humanity.

If Jesus had lived forty years longer, to spend himself in a still greater career of devoted service, would he have changed at all—seen God more truly, had even more faith in men, grasped new conceptions of truth and duty? Without a doubt. Experience such as he was having always brings

perhaps even death. Thus, men are to triumph over death by not dying! Others, like Metchnikoff, allow that it is forever "appointed unto men once to die," but hope, by abolishing diseases, by learning how to live right, and by thus lengthening out the human span to two or three times its present possible length, to overcome the fear of death and to cultivate contentment, if not actual joy, in our mortality. It is the death that springs upon us like a wild beast, and does not rest until it has torn us to pieces, or the death that does its dreadful work insidiously and secretly until one's power of resistance breaks down, or the death that nips the human bud before it unfolds, withers bloom before it brings forth fruit, plucks fruit before it can ripen—it is this death that would seem to be indeed no man's friend. But if men were to die full of years and aweary of life, if life went out only as a candle does, burnt down to its socket, if life's full wish had been fulfilled, if one did not die until one wanted to, then one could comprehend the event, for then it would be man closing his earthly existence at the end of his long day's work.

Or we might grant that death is in itself no man's friend and yet comfort ourselves with the reflection that it makes virtues and values possible which more than compensate for the evil. Should we have religion and philosophy if there were no death? Should we have a sense of the seriousness and urgency of life if there were no death? Should we have an

effective admonition to give life its highest worth, to improve the time, to fill the world with good deeds, if there were no death? But I must return to this later.

There are others of our human brothers who look upon death as an unmitigated evil. All our consolations and explanations are inadequate, they urge, and we must be satisfied with everlasting dissatisfaction as we confront the bitter fact of our mortality. Stoical resignation—sagacious indulgence: this is our alternative, in view of the shortness of life, the cruelty of the world, the irrevocableness of destiny. Their counsel is: Do not think about death, do not allow the thought to obtrude, and if it does, banish it as soon as you can.

There is of course a grain of truth in this counsel. The strong and wise man who strives, fights, creates, does not *brood* over death, but firmly and unflinchingly fixes his eyes upon the requirements of the hour and the tasks of the future, unmindful of the common human lot which will come to him, too, by and by. But this is neither resignation nor indulgence. Nor is it the ostrich-like make-believe in our attitude to death. Death cannot be abolished by forgetting. To triumph over death, not by preoccupation and oblivion thereto, but by *remembering*, that would be triumph indeed! Our fathers were wont to think much upon death, to read often what their Bibles said upon the subject, to preach and to sing about death. They may have gone to

an extreme, but, for all that, in the face of the apparent finality of death, the phoenix of their hope arose ever anew out of the ashes of their despair. I am sure that we have gone to the other extreme, and because we have we are not *masters* of death as they were. We are its slaves. We are not free. And our religious life is suffering because of our way of trying to triumph over death by shirking the thought of it.

And so, in the midst of our modern bewilderment and distress, our dread and cowardice, I am not without hope that you may care to think with me a little while upon this subject. For no one understands life who does not also understand death. At all events, death is one of the most important factors, if not *the* most important, of our existence, precisely as important as birth itself. It is a fact of boundless range, a reality that surrounds us every moment, that speaks to us in every throb of the heart. But it is with death as it is with all the great simple basic facts of our outer and inner life—as it is with air and light and the stream of time and the beating of the heart—we do not *sense* them, just because they are so mighty, so constant, so obvious. And yet there is something overmastering and mysterious in the way our whole manifold and passionate life rests upon the dark waters of death into which it must soon sink again. The fact is so great that, as I say, we who want to understand the mystery of life should now and

then dedicate an hour of our church service to death.

Death casts its dark shadow upon all of us, obscures and jeopardizes our happiness. We mean by happiness the will to live. It would seem, then, that death was the peculiar foe of happiness. This will to live is so deeply rooted in all of us that life itself is frequently viewed as happiness—any kind of life being preferred to death, the one great unhappiness. But we can never be happy, if we have not conquered "the last enemy which is death." The question of our happiness is largely a question as to how we can gain the victory over death, how we can make the master our servant, the foe our friend. From the beginning—according to the old Book of Genesis—man was set to have dominion over the earth; and death is one of earth's things over which he is to have dominion. But how?

Time was when death was looked upon as a punishment for sin. One man sinned and death entered the world by sin. Such a view must infinitely intensify the fear of death. That life is a punishment of life one may well believe. But to hold death as punishment, that no man should do upon the basis of reason, but only upon the basis of absolute and immediate revelation.

Again, death has been pictured as a great door through which men passed from the partial and divided happiness of earth into the full and unclouded joy of eternal bliss. There was a time when this

was a real and positive conviction. Such believers there are still—men and women who say: I desire to depart and be with Christ; for me to live is Christ, to die is gain. And it may be that many of us envy these good people the happiness of this naïve faith. That is not the question now. And it is not so much the fact as the *form* of this fact which gives us pause. But the main point is that a life which constantly looks beyond the grave for a happiness in which there shall be no grave, and no death, is self-destructive, blinds the eyes to what lies on this side of the grave, falsifies life's values and life's happiness which are here and now. To seek a happiness which no eye has seen and no ear heard, that in the end is to sacrifice the most certain to the most uncertain. What is worse, it is to subject one's self to that class of ecclesiastics whose business it is to claim and carry the keys to this transcendent and inconceivable bliss, and who hold out the prospect of entrance into this bliss to those only who sell their happiness and life here for the bliss there. Thus, not indeed death itself, but the *idea of the cause and effect* of death became a fearful weapon for the exploitation and subjugation of man. The belief that death itself would bring eternal life created an anxiety and fear about life which constantly endangered the outlook for eternal happiness; and the servility of such fear ultimately deceived the soul that was hungering for happiness as to what that happiness really was.

In our day we must cease to think of death as punishment of sin or as a door out of life. We gain no light upon the dark problem until we realize that death signifies a necessary order of life itself. Death is a natural necessity. Death could say: "I, whom you reproach as the destroyer of life, I am really life's great friend. Without me, life would not be living; I am life's depth, its beauty and zest, and passion." Death is life's friend—what can that mean? Is it not the dearest dream of the human heart that death shall be no more? Is not this why in our day men hang with bated breath upon Bergson's and Metchnikoff's words which I recalled at the outset? Do we not wish to sit at the meal of existence until we are full to satiety? Should we not like to drive the old man with the scythe out of life's garden?

O my friends, I fear that all the trees and flowers of that garden would then wither and waste away. In nature's everlasting alternation of origination and decay, death is the great rejuvenator. Life is movement and mutation. Everything new that comes to be life buries an old, and if the old were no longer buried, no longer would the new be born. A life without death, a life in which death signified only a contingency, would be life without growth, at bottom would be no life at all, but would itself be death. What would an everlasting spring be? What a day without a night? Bounds belong to all that is earthly, else it loses its power. Death sets

a goal to life—it articulates our life in the limits of space and time. In this way, it makes life something definite, measurable, tangible, just *our* human life, which would have no true human content without the succession of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It is at the graves over which we march that we first note that we live at all; it is over against what has been, what lies behind us, that we feel ourselves to be living and present, that we feel within our being the pulsing heart-beat of the world. It is the fact that our days have their end and goal that binds and holds all their moments together, that brings one into the other, so that each moment becomes a human moment, with all the height and depth that each of them hides away within its own wondrous being. The shortness of time is the eternal admonition to redeem the time, to improve the opportunity. The seriousness of death is the consecration of life, the strength of love, the spur to action. Every joy gets its glow from the feeling that it comes to us but once. This *once-ness* is the secret melancholy at the heart of every pleasure, which yet heightens the pleasure. Why is each hour so important? Because it comes only once and never again. Why is each task so full of meaning? Because it requires decisions which can never be repeated. Why is life so real and earnest? Because we must hasten! Thus it is the background of death that gives life its depth, its urgency, its seriousness. So there breaks out of

time the fire of eternity which consumes time. Transitoriness is the form in which eternity reveals itself to us. Death necessarily belongs to life. To see this, not to devote one's thinking and willing and feeling to the vain effort of forgetting or eliminating death, is to win the victory over death.

> Said Death to Life,
> "All things are mine";
> Said Life to Death,
> "And *thou* art thine."

When we see that death is our friend we have won the victory. Night is our friend. Is it not good that there is not simply a hot, clear day, but also a still, mysterious night with the eternal stars shining in the beauty of the blue above? We could not endure the day without the night. And we could not endure life without death. Often life makes us so weary. Sometimes a longing for death steals over young hearts, both in the midst of pleasure and in the pain of youthful seeking and seething. To be sure, much of this is fleeting sentiment, shadows of clouds in a sunny day. But this play of sentiment ceases when life's little day has worn on apace. It does not fit into the earnestness of life. Deeper feelings take its place in the soul. Youth ever hopes that things will come out right in the end, but age sees the insufficiency of life. We know that certain shipwrecks which we have suffered cannot simply be forgotten and erased from our life. We have had too much experience with ourselves to

hope with so much confidence that there shall yet be as bright and big a day as we once dreamed. Disillusions, errors, reproaches, darknesses, accumulate in our lives. We wander among broken idols. So much that is already dead gathers up in a human existence! Dead loves, dead friendships, outlived errors, aye, outlived ideals also, poisoned relationships, wilted flowers, gravestones—in short, so much death! And there is only *one* redemption from all this death, and that is death itself. What a rest and refreshment for the weary and wounded heart! Often life seems so confined and moldy, like a dark and stuffy room, where we lie dreaming feverish dreams—then the thought of death is like a window out of which we may fly to cool the brow, and to see the peaceful stars in the great, quiet, pure, sacred night! How good it is that there is a night for our life, and not simply a long endless day! Day comes with its thousand pettinesses, humiliates us, robs us of happiness and peace. Very well, let us be comforted; the night comes, holy night! What does it amount to that people say this or that about us? Why fret over the few broken and blasted joys when we must die tomorrow? Let us wander out of life's clang and clatter into the still and sacred night, mount aloft, greet the stars, be quiet and glad, cooled and pacified by the air of eternity. Ever and anon in the stress and storm of life, let us think of death, and this thought will be a marvelous cure for our whole being.

But death is not simply life's friend and benefactor, it is also life's interpreter. It tells us better than any science or philosophy can what life really is and ought to be. Have you ever been at death's door? Then did you not at such a time pass through the deepest experiences of your life? Was not the truth of life clearer to you than ever before? Did you not see, as in the light of the Judgment Day, what was true and what was false in your life? Did you not discern the meaning of life, and the perversity with which fools evaluate things, overlook the true values and run after false ones? Did you not feel how stupid and inert our existence ordinarily is, how far from truth and reality, and did you not resolve never to forget what you saw in that clear hour of death's revelations?

But if we have not faced death ourselves, we have stood by the deathbed of loved ones. It was an instructive hour beyond compare. God spoke so powerfully to us that our souls bowed to the earth before the weight of his words. The truth of life was revealed. The world faded from us. Life's big woes, life's bitter struggles, how they shriveled into insignificance there! How could we grade the things of life according to their worth, were it not for death? Death is a hot fire which burns up the hay and stubble of vanity, and leaves the genuine gold of life purified. "In the hour and article of death"—to use a phrase of our fathers—what seems important to us? The honors we longed for, the

victories we achieved by having our own way and will, the satisfying of our thirst for revenge, the hours of pleasure, the triumph of our pride, the exaction of our rights? How these things seem petty and unworthy now! How gladly we would cast them aside and put other things in their places which seem to us at present of much less value! In the solemn hour of death how great the plain fulfilment of the duties of love and faithfulness seems! Oh, how we curse our selfishness, which blinds and hardens us so that we cannot see the truth of life! Of all the genuine laws of life, love is the supreme and all-controlling one. Death, the greatest fact of life, is the strongest witness to the truth of the gospel. It is death that lets us see and be sure of a higher order of things, of love and loyalty, of truth and goodness. At death no one doubts that this higher order is the true order. Therefore death is something great. Therefore death makes man great. We now know how to prepare for death. We now know how we can stand before death unafraid. What of ourselves do we leave behind us for other men, when we must go hence? Is that which we have given to men, is that which we shall leave to men, worth our living for? Are men stronger, truer, freer, because we have lived? Is there a human soul in the world to whom we have been a necessity? Is there someone who has found in us a revelation of God, who has had a vision of the life of God, of the love of God, in and through us? If so, we have

known happiness upon the earth, we have fulfilled our calling in life, and death cannot bear witness against us.

And the after-life? Inasmuch as while we know that there is a connection between mind and brain, we do not know that this connection is a *necessary* connection, science leaves room for faith, science cannot say that the death of the brain involves of necessity the death of the mind. There is room for hope. Not vetoed by science, love believeth all things, hopeth all things, and love never faileth. I do not mean to say, even if science made faith and hope and love seem absurd, that they would not outweary the absurdity and the contradiction and urge their requirements. I believe that they would. At all events, I do not mean to close my sermon without a word about the life after death.

In the moment when we become dust, we realize most powerfully that there is something in us that is more than dust. More than dust! For, O my friends, precisely the greatness that flames forth in death points beyond death. I have been saying that we know so much of death—it serves life, illumines life, augments life. Thus it is not death, but life, that has the last word in God's world. Death is not the last; it is only a form of the development of life, not the annihilation of life. This is the presupposition upon which everything depends.

I have been saying that death is friend and benefactor. But I must not forget. I must not

beguile or befool myself. I think of the battlefields of the bloody world. I think of the children that scarcely bloom before they wither. I think of the men whom death breaks in the years of their best strength, unmindful of whether they are so bitterly necessary to their own or to the world. I think of all that is incomprehensible, cruel, and ghastly in death. I see that, after all, there is a feeling in all of us that death is something unnatural, something which does not fit into God's world. This feeling is mirrored in the story of Paradise. Painters have ever tried to limn the nameless horror of the first parents who saw their son dead and did not know what death was. The savage has this feeling still. The horror of death tells us in thunderous tones that there is something enigmatic, terrible, unnatural in it. Again we wander out into the night, not now into the starry night, but into an unfriendly and unfamiliar darkness which suffocates us. O death, how bitter thou art!

But in the darkness of death there have ever been men who could not believe in death. I say "believe," for death, like life, is a thing of faith and not of science. These men have sought for life, and seers speak of a light which falls from beyond the grave over on this side to us. Greek philosophers, with elevation of soul, preach their faith in an immortal substance of us, Godlike and ineffable, and try to picture to us a life beyond, full of beauty and depth. Never have intimations been wanting

that death is not the end. By and by the victorious shout rings forth: Our Savior Christ Jesus has abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel! Jesus embodies an order of life higher than the natural. In him there is a world-transcending life. In the gospel of Jesus, in the Kingdom of God, there is the apocalypse of a world other and higher than our world of shadows and of dust! To this transcendent world death does not belong. It is the world of the Father, of the Eternal, of the God of the living and not of the dead. Death is swallowed up in victory. All this is not a matter of demonstration, but of faith. But we live by faith, not by demonstration. *The living God*—that alone is the key to the riddle. The living God, the Father who has revealed himself in power. Thus the point is reached where victory over death is consummated. *God or death*—that is the alternative, the greatest of all the great opposites that pervade the world. If we had no God I do not know how we would escape the dominion of death. Our relation to God the Father is the indestructible bond which exalts us above death. Death is for man, not man for death.

PRAYER

O God: From everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Thy years fail not. Thine eternity underlies our time, giving consistency and meaning to our lives—otherwise we indeed spend our days as a tale that is

told. We think of life's little day, and as we think we pray that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. While it is still day, help us to work, and to serve the Eternal Goodness. We think of death, and rejoice that the death of our Lord has made him the lord of death. Be thou with us in the Valley of the Shadow, that we may fear no evil. And at eventime may there be light—and may there be the bridge of sunset into the eternal day.

But, O God, friend after friend departs. Who has not lost a friend? We grieve for the touch of a vanished hand and for the sound of a voice that is still. Do thou comfort and sustain us with thy presence and thy love. As we cherish in our hearts the image of those we have loved long since and lost awhile, so we trust that thou dost in thy great Father-Heart. We trust that thy Living Love cannot let those that are loved cease to be. If it be thy will, may we meet again in thy presence where we shall be satisfied both with being in thy likeness and with the communion of souls throughout eternity. We ask, O God, in thy name! AMEN.